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MAGAZINE

June 1915 • 15 Cts.

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 3

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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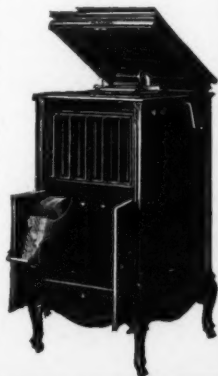
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 21

JUNE, 1915

NUMBER 3

The "Rachel Straight"

By Grace Margaret Callaher

Author of "In Exile," "A Singer of Songs," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

YOUNG Doctor Cope flung up his arms in a long sigh of relief, and set his lips to a whistle. Work was over, he was a boy out of school. He jumped up with such vim that his office chair spun on its screw, and went to look out upon the pretty world all day kept from him. His dog, as much irked as he, frisked up in a joyful leap.

"Pulled through our first day, eh, Spark?" His master crumpled up the shaggy ears.

"Business all over, dear?" A little white mouse of a woman glided in. Her voice was silken. She stroked his sleeve with small, fine fingers.

"I hope to the Lord it is, Gran!" The doctor's words were violent, but his voice was deep and soft. "I've heard a long tale o' Miss Melinda Medberry's fifty years of rheumatism, an' I've prescribed for the Widow Bell's nerves, that were broke down when she was a girl, an' I've been in an' out o' all the mysterious workin's o' Cap'n Dodd's strange spells, so I guess I'm acquainted now with Pettipaug's most famous cases."

The old lady laughed, a little husky sound like an insect in dry grass.

"We ain't all cracked to Pettipaug, Gilbert. Your grandfather thought the

profession o' medicine here was o' considerable interest."

"Don't you worry, Gran." He patted her hand softly. "I was just jokin'. There's real sick folks here that need help, like every place."

They looked, together, down the village street, shadowed deep with elms and splashed here and there with afternoon sunshine. The street, bordered by wide grass plats and fenced by comfortable, serious old houses, ran straight down to the wharf, where, on a patch of blue, a square-rigged bark and a tall-masted schooner swung at anchor. At long intervals a load of hay, drawn by oxen, plodded up the street; a farmer in a democrat jogged by; or a woman pattered across to gossip with her neighbor.

As Madam Cope, as her world called her, gazed down this vista of drowsy living, her heart quivered with love of the village, whose ancient sanctities were the heritage of her race. To her, Pettipaug was the desired of all nations.

The heart of her grandson stirred, too, but in a queer forlornity he had not felt since he was a little chap alone in the dark. The peaceful street drifted out of focus, merged in another scene

like colors in a kaleidoscope. The misty hills towered into somber crags, the blue river narrowed and dulled to a gray torrent, slashing swordlike through the mountains. Before him lay a red-earthed, raw town, thronged with men, eager on their manifold occasions. In that black cabin on the mountain he had been born; through those passes, over those sagebrush plains, he had ridden since he was old enough to stay on a horse.

The old woman spoke first:

"Poor father, he doted so on havin' you to practice with him! 'If my only son did die West, Etty,' he'd tell over an' over again, 'maybe I can have my grandsón with me.' An' he never lived to view it."

"I came on just for him, Gran. He knew me before he died," her grandson explained, with his extreme gentleness, curious in so big a man.

"He did set by it so!" as if he had not spoken.

The young man smiled patiently. "I reckon I'll jog off on ol' Bolt, now."

The little person puckered her lips into a pink bow, sign that some one of the thousand prejudices that formed her code of conduct had been affronted.

"Bolt ain't used to carryin' a weight. Your grandfather always hitched him to the gig."

"I see he ain't. I'm in trade with a fellow that owns a Morgan can tote an ox."

"Clk! Ck!"

The young doctor turned his deepset eyes upon his grandmother in surprised attention. She was an extraordinarily pretty old lady, with apple-blossom cheeks, bright blue eyes, silvery-white hair, and the expression of a meek saint.

"Ain't she sweet in the face?" thought her grandson. "But she don't like what I said; why?"

Before he could ask, she murmured: "Here's a patient, Gil," and slipped away noiselessly.

The doctor, stifling a sigh, dropped back into his chair.

"Another case o' old-woman fidgets?" he thought, and there swept through his brain a picture of his last case in his own land—a wild ride through wind and rain, a caved-in mine shaft, rows of bleeding, battered men stretched out in stoic endurance, waiting his skill.

"Come in!" he said aloud. "Good afternoon!"

A slender girl, straight as a wand, with dark, pretty hair curling around her face, and eyes shining like stars, marched in on him.

"She can't be sick!" Aloud: "Take a chair."

The girl flitted into a seat with a birdlike quickness, her scant calico dress pulling up well above her ankles.

"What can I do for you?" the doctor asked in his slow, kind voice.

The newcomer gave him a straight look from her shining eyes.

"I want three hundred dollars, please," in one snap.

The young man bowed.

"I'm speakin' to?"

"Miss Forest," with sternness.

Gilbert hid a smile. "If I'd called her 'sissy'!" Then, aloud: "Are you collectin' for somethin'?"

"I'm collectin' for myself."

"I reckon you'll have to go slow on this trail, Miss Forest."

"Call me Mary 'Lizabeth," in a sudden thaw. "We're kin."

"That's good. I'm new on that trail, too. You see, I haven't been here but nine days."

"Your great-grandfather an' mine were brothers."—All her answers were shot at him in a flash.

"Now, that money, Cousin Mary 'Lizabeth." He smiled at her encouragingly, and, although he was a big, clumsily made fellow, with a homely face, his smile was as sweet as a woman's.



"Mat Forest! I thought you were over to Deacon Naxson's hayin'!"

Mary 'Lizabeth repelled the smile. "Pretty near everybody in Pettipaug is kin to me. I hate some o' 'em."

Gilbert passed this over.

"You're my guardian." She flung it at him.

"The deuce I am!" in flat surprise.

"I don't like it any better'n you. You're Mat's guardian, too. But you just keep his money—when he has any. I got to ask you if I can do things.

You always say 'yes,' though," as if to crush any rising hope of power.

The young man struggled in this coil of responsibilities.

"Was grandfather your guardian?"

"Of course!" tartly. "Gran'ther Stow left us the money, but he was so 'fraid we'd grow up like father—he just despised father—that he hung us round the neck o' ol' Doctor Cope."

"Your father an' mother are dead?"

"Long ago. Gran'ther an' Gran'ma Stow raised us—as much as we've had any raisin'—an' when gran'ther died — Why, the will's right there in your safe!" she broke off impatiently.

The young doctor sought among his grandfather's precise papers.

"There's a goodish whack o' money comin' to you, that's certain," after a slow reading. "But it's tied up tight. This will says neither you nor your brother is to have a dollar of it unless, in the judgment o' your guardian, you stand in 'pressin' need' o' it."

"I tell you we are in pressin' need." She shook her elflocks in his face.

"You see, Mary 'Lizabeth," very gently, "I'm the one has to decide about that. You tell me how it is you want to use it."

"The old doctor never asked."

"Is it somethin' for yourself?"

"Yes—to buy hair ribbons."

The young doctor flushed through his deep tan, but he answered, with his unfailing quiet:

"Suppose you tell your brother Mat to come talk to me."

"I won't have you scarin' Mat!" she stormed.

He laughed, in spite of himself. "I can't scare you, eh?"

A curious look of experience shadowed the small, eager face. "It don't matter about *me*."

His big heart was touched at her smallness and her courage.

"Let's fix it this way: I'll come over to your house to-morrow to——"

"Spy out the nakedness o' the land!" She sprang to her feet, nimbly as a boy, and shook a hard little fist close to his face. "I'm goin' to have that three hundred dollars if I steal it!"

The doctor caught her hand in his.

"What way's that to talk to your guardian?" he mocked good-naturedly. "Listen! I promise to give you that money, if I anyways can."

Mary 'Lizabeth slipped through his hold.

"Good night!" fluttered over her shoulder, in her high, sweet voice.

Gilbert watched her fairly fly down his walk.

"That Forest girl is wilder'n a hawk." The voice of his grandmother, close to his shoulder, made him start.

"She sure isn't much gentled," he agreed. "Who is she? An' what sort o' a fellow is her brother Mat?"

His eyes seemed to follow the girl's vanishing figure, his hands shifted some papers on the table, yet he marked both his grandmother's slight tremble and the faint acid of her voice.

"Her Grandfather Stow was a most promisin' young man till he wedded Zelinda Millington, the worst-dispositioned girl in the township. She led him an awful life o' it till he died. Their only child was a daughter with a temper full as bad as her mother's. She ran off with Mathias Forest, an' they had these two children. Your grandfather was plagued to pieces with 'em, but he was so easy, he spoiled 'em always."

"Where do they live?"

"Up to the ol' place, with their Gran'ma Stow. She's bedrid, but she ain't lost any o' her spirit, from what I hear tell. The neighbors say she hollers at Mary 'Lizabeth from dawn till dark."

"Poor little thing!" with compassion.

"I guess she can hold her own," indifferently. "There's Ann Jane ringin' the supper bell. She's got hot biscuits for us."

The day was at the first tender hour of a June morning, when birds were still singing, and every blade of grass yet shook at its tip a diamond of dew, as Mary 'Lizabeth Forest stepped out of her door to feed the flock of white chickens clustered at the gate of their runway. All her own special domain

—the flower beds, the dooryard, the chicken run—were in shining order, but the realm of Mat might be said—in a famous phrase—"to flourish in neglect." Sheds were tumbling into dissolution, tools lay rusting in the uncut grass, and rank weeds choked the paths. The girl gave an angry tug at some of these as she hurried along with her pan of grain.

"My soul! I wish the rye an' oats would grow like they do!"

Her hand was on the gate when a voice called softly:

"Ship ahoy! Any breakfast goin'?"

The pan bounced in her hand.

"Mat Forest! I thought you were over to Deacon Naxson's hayin'!"

"Too much like work," the newcomer answered placidly. "I been fishin' all night off Hatchet's. Had the Ol' Boy's own luck!" He seated himself on the chopping block. "Sixty big fish!"

"Where are those fish now?"

"Gave 'em all to Lot Beckwith. Now, don't you rare up," for she had stamped her foot. "'Twas his boat I went in, an', besides, I borrowed a sum o' money from Lot a time back, an' this was a handy way to pay it."

"What does Deacon Naxson think, you suppose?"

"That I ain't hayin' for him," calmly.

"Run 'long, sis! Get a bite o' some kind o' food for me. I'm 'bout famished!"

With hot cheeks and flashing eyes, Mary 'Lizabeth flew for the house and began, with a kind of furtive haste, to boil coffee and fry eggs.

"Mat was to get five dollars for that three days' hayin'. I deem he views it we can live on air," she muttered, as she tiptoed from pantry to stove.

A deep voice boomed out ominously:

"Polly, you come here!"

The girl ran into the front room, where, in a wheel chair, sat an old woman, a mountain of flesh, whose fat, cross face was circled by a frilled cap

that gave it somewhat the look of a disagreeable sunflower. She poked an old-fashioned ear trumpet up at the girl.

"What you doin' now?"

"Gettin' ready to bake cake, Gran."

"I thought I smelled hot coffee."

"Just washin' out the coffeepot."

"Umm! Pretty slack about gettin' your dishes done, ain't ye?"

This seemed to call for no reply.

"What kind o' cake you makin'?"

"Lady cake," at a wild venture.

"Umm! Too many eggs. You beat up a good, serviceable cup cake instead."

"Yes'm." Her granddaughter turned back into the kitchen.

"Polly, Polly," again the boom from the foreroom.

"Yes, Gran." Polly was in at once.

"Who went by the window a minute back?"

"Nobody."

"Did, too! I ain't blind, if I be deaf. You tell me the truth, now. 'Tain't that shiftless brother o' yourn throwed up his work o' hayin' over to Abner Naxson's?"

Polly's face set woodenly. "No, Gran. True as I live, it wasn't anybody! You just saw a shadow."

The old woman grumbled down in her throat: "If my legs would only serve me, I'd soon see."

Polly hurriedly scrambled the eggs onto a plate and the coffee into a cup, and started for the garden.

"Polly!" Another summons.

"Now what?" But her tone was sweet.

"You get me a proper good drink o' spring water."

The girl dipped a cup into a bucket on the kitchen table, and, after waiting two minutes by the clock, took it in to her grandmother.

The old woman eyed her with hard suspicion.

"You been to the spring for this?"

"Yes, dear," with the special coolness

each fib evoked in her. "Don't it taste right?"

"Shan't try it, out o' that common crockery cup. You fetch in one o' my nice chiny ones from the keepin'-room cupboard."

Out and in pattered the unflagging feet. Gran'ma Stow drank two drops, returned the cup, and remarked, in a tone heavy with displeasure:

"It's a mercy I ain't one o' your fanciful spirits. I can make out to hold on to life with what poor 'tentions I get from my own flesh an' blood."

Polly escaped, with the cooling breakfast, to Mat.

"Are you a mite surprised," she asked him, "that mother ran off with father to get away from Gran?"

Mat was not interested in his grandmother's moods, as he was able always to keep out of her reach. He ate his breakfast in haste, while his sister sat on the doorstep watching him. They were much alike in slender grace of movement, in softly bright coloring, in dark, clear eyes. In the brother, however, a kind of languid ease replaced the sister's vivid life, and the fine, strong lines of her lips and chin were in him blurred and coarsened. He had a charming thrill in his voice, however, and his smile would have wiled a stone image.

"Say, Poll," as he set down his cup, "have you seen ol' Doc Cope?"

"I don't believe he's more'n five years older'n you," literally.

"Did he produce that three hundred?"

"No; he's comin' up this mornin' to see if the farm needs it."

"Well, you're a wise one! Why didn't you say you wanted it to buy the handsomest little schooner ever built on this coast? Poll, she's an able boat!"

"I don't believe he knows a schooner from a square-rigged bark." All the sailor's contempt for the uplander moved in her voice.

Mat's dark eyes had begun to burn, his voice vibrated joyously.

"She's pretty as a bride, Polly! You'll be wild over her, quick as you clap eyes on her. An' sail! Why, she'll lie two points nearer the wind than Nehemiah Gault's *Widgeon*, an' you know what she is. Named *Rachel Straight*."

Polly's eyes caught a spark for an instant, then dulled to prosaic business.

"But, Matty, dear, do you really believe you're meant for a coaster? It's awful hard work in rough weather, an' you've got to be so—so—up to system about gettin' your cargoes."

Mat threw back his head in amused scorn.

"You see to that three hundred, sis, an' I'll keep up the business end. I've drudged my last day on a farm, I can tell you. I'm a sailor born; don't you mistake that."

Polly's glance roamed over the neglected corn patch and ruinous barns, and her shrewd mind wondered about the drudgery. But if she was fiery, she was never mean. She only smiled a rather sad smile for so young a face, and picked up the dishes.

Mat lounged away with his lazy grace.

"I'm goin' to help Lot clean the fish. I guess I won't be back till supper."

"You don't judge you'd best see Gilbert Cope, 'stead o' me?"

"Oh, Lord, no! I never could squeeze a penny out o' ol' doc, an' I don't reckon I'll strike any better gait with this one. If you can't get around him any other way, turn on the tears; that'll sluice down his hard heart. An', mind you, Polly, if I can't get my own coastin' schooner, I'll ship foremast hand for China."

"You can't scare me!" retorted his sister, yet her face whitened. The worst of Mat's threats was that no matter how wild they sounded, he always carried them out.

She heard the gate rattle on its hinges, and knew, with a start, that it must be the young doctor. Snatching off her apron with one hand and smoothing down her wind-roughened hair with the other, she hurried around the house to meet him. He was already thumping at the knocker, and her grandmother was shouting in her alarming voice:

"Polly! Polly! Polly! There's a tramp at the door. Likely we'll be murdered an' robbed an' scared crazy!"

In no mood for hospitality, Mary 'Lizabeth darted around the corner of the house, shrieking, to be heard above her grandmother's cries:

"Come in—side door. That's just—gran'mother."

The young doctor's deepset eyes twinkled, and his voice halted ever so little as he said:

"Good mornin'! Don't you think you ought to tell her who I am?"

"Tell her yourself. She's bedrid, but there ain't another thing the matter with her."

Accordingly, Gilbert seated himself beside the old woman, while her granddaughter disappeared into the kitchen, and listened sympathizingly to a fearful tale of infirmities, any one of which would have carried off the sufferer in half a day.

"An' here I set hour after hour," concluded the old woman, "all stark, starin' 'lone. If the house was to ketch fire, I'd be burned to a coal 'fore the neighbors could get to me."

"There ain't a word o' truth in that," Polly remarked softly, from the door. "If I so much as step beyond the gate, I run for Susan 'Melia Tallett to sit by her."

"It's ter'ble mournful," went on the old woman, "to be lef' to the ministrations o' the children o' this day an' generation. Young folks in my time deemed it a privilege to care for the 'flicted. It ain't but little I require,

neither—just a hand's turn once in a way. Polly, you move my chair a grain to the right. There's a draft creepin' in under that door."

Gilbert stepped forward.

"I'll move you," in his big voice.

"Let be! Let be!" with immediate wrath. "I ain't one to be pulley-hauled round by any come-by-chance."

Mary 'Lizabeth set her small, sturdy back against the chair. Suddenly she felt herself lifted out of the way by strong hands under her arms.

"I won't hurt her," a calm voice told her, as the doctor swung the chair about.

Gran'ma Stow was too amazed to object, but never speechless for long, she turned upon her granddaughter.

"You met Doctor Cope afore this mornin'?"

"Never!" firmly.

"You didn't send for him unbeknownst to me?"

"Oh, no!" more firmly still.

"Umm!"

Gilbert rose.

"I'll be goin'," he said. "Good mornin', Mrs. Stow. I'll come in again soon."

Polly followed, motioning him out to her favorite refuge, the kitchen steps and the chopping block.

"Likely you're awful shocked at what I tol' Gran," she defied him, as she took the steps and he the block.

"It wasn't the truth," he answered neutrally.

"I don't tell her the truth *ever*," she hurled at him. "It would make her miserable, an' she'd ramp an' storm, an' we'd be in a terrible stew all day long. You can think I'm goin' straight to the bad place, if you want to."

Gilbert stooped to pick up a chip, which he twisted between his fingers.

"Is your brother home?" mildly.

"No, he ain't. But he wants that three hundred dollars." Her voice quivered with nervousness from the late



"Polly, you come here!"

scene and the part she had played in it, and in a fury at herself for showing emotion, she cried stormily: "An' he's got to have it, too!"

"What use does he want to put it to?"

The doctor's voice was gentle, his words considerate, yet somehow Polly was reminded of the hands that had lifted her from the chair. She studied him soberly, all his big, heavy body and homely, slow face. Set against her handsome, winning Mat, he was a dull figure, indeed; and yet he held the power of success and happiness over Mat. The thought steeled her.

"He's goin' to buy the schooner *Rachel Straight*, an' go into the coast-in' trade! He's got this splendid chance

to buy an able boat for nothin', you might say. She's been on the rocks, so she's scraped a little, but that can be fixed all right."

"Ah!"

"I tell you it's luck that don't come a boy's way twice."

Gilbert looked off across the farm. He might not be able to tell a schooner from a bark, but he knew good land run to waste when he saw it.

"Who's goin' to work the farm?"

"Mat *hates* the farm!"

"I should judge so," dryly.

"He'll hire some good workman," Polly hastened to add.

"How'll you an' your grandmother get along all by yourselves when he's gone off on his coastin' trips?"

This did give Polly pause, as her plans had never gone that far.

"Oh, we'll make out complete. One o' the Tallett boys—or—or—somebody'll keep us company o' night."

"Ain't there goin' to be more expenses than just the schooner herself?" Gilbert shifted his ground. "He'll have to stock her an' pay his men, an' like that."

"He won't need but two hands an' the cook."

"An' he ain't got any cargoes promised?"

"He'll pick 'em up fast, in a boat like that." She countered him at every turn.

"An' he's—let's see—a year older'n you?"

"Eighteen months." Polly tried to look as if she wore a furrowed brow and gray hair.

"Kind o' young to be captain o' his boat an' manager o' a business, ain't he?"

Polly stamped her foot in helpless fury. It was like beating a feather bed; nothing you did to it left any impression.

"Mat says if he don't get this money for the schooner, he'll ship before the mast, for China." She brought every word out with its own ominous weight.

The young doctor's serious face lighted up in an amused smile.

"Might be the best thing if he did," he agreed heartily. "Make him sick o' the sea, or teach him to be a sailor."

The girl caught her breath in a gasp of astonishment, then the "Millington disposition," well known to Pettipaug, rushed out upon him in a torrent of words.

"You stand there an' laugh, 'cause you think you've got the best o' us, bein' guardian. An' you set yourself up—a man that ain't so much as laid eyes on Mat, an' don't know a schooner from Noah's ark—to decide what Mat shall do with his life. An' you keep back our money—our own money, that

Grandfather Stow gave us—to do—to—to use it yourself, likely." Her cheeks were flaming now, her eyes black with anger. "But I tell you I'll have that money if I have to take it right out o' your safe! An' it won't be stealin', either—it'll just be gettin' my own!"

She stopped, not for lack of words, but of breath. The young man's face reddened a little, and at her outrageous suggestion his jaw set solidly, but when he spoke, it was with calm:

"If the money was mine, you should have it to buy boats, or any other foolishness you pleased, but it's your own, an' I'm bound in law an' in honor to take the best care o' it for you. There ain't so much left that you can have any such sum right off now, anyhow. It's just silly bluster for you to talk about stealin' it out o' my safe. It ain't in the safe, but up in Middletown Bank."

A crazy longing to hurl herself against his big, solid imperturbability shook her all through. She took a step forward, with clenched hands, pulled herself in with a savage jerk, and darted into the house. Gilbert whistled a long note to himself, sought his horse at the gate, and rode off on his first rounds, with a new light on his previous theories of women.

That noon, when he came in to dinner, his grandmother remarked, as she filled his teacup: "'How you find ol' Mis' Stow?'"

Her grandson stared; he had not told her where he was going, nor had he seen a soul there except the old woman and the girl.

"Seems all right," he answered easily.

"That little hussy of a Mary 'Lizabeth's enough to wear down a stone wall. They do say she has regular tantrums, an' screams worse'n a loon. An' I've heard tell she cheats that poor ol' body about everythin' she does." Old Mrs. Cope's voice, pronouncing these

condemnations, was as smooth as milk; her little rosebud of a mouth puckered into a smile.

Again Gilbert stared. Had his grandmother been behind the bushes? The little old woman changed the subject instantly.

"If you get a mite o' time after dinner, Gil, I wish you'd step over to Dosia Gerrish with some o' my damask roses. She does prize 'em so! An' inquire how Cap'n Gerrish is makin' out."

As Gilbert crossed the meadow that separated his grandmother's house from Captain Gerrish's cottage, Madam Cope eyed his tall figure through narrowed lids.

"Dosia Gerrish is the prettiest-behaved young girl in Pettipaug, an' the one suits me best. Cap'n Gerrish is well fixed, too, for all he dwells in an humble house. If it's so that Gil takes to her——"

She stooped down to stroke the cat, purring against her dress.

A chill dawn was striving against the soft blackness of the summer night, and the mists that all through the darkness had wrapped river and coves in silvery scarfs were fading out against the gray sky, when Gilbert Cope heard a voice—faint and tired, yet piercing:

"Doctor! Doctor Cope!"

He was at the window in a bound.

"What's wrong?"

"Gran's dyin'. Come quick!" The figure vanished behind the trees.

Drawing on his clothes with the speed of practice, the doctor hurried across the grass after the figure. His strides took him over the ground at a great pace, yet he had reached the Stow farm before he caught up with Mary 'Lizabeth. She was white with fear and gasping from exhaustion, but she hurried into the bedroom, without a word. Her grandmother was propped up in an old-fashioned four-poster, her color livid, her mouth hanging, her chest ris-

ing and falling with wheezing breaths. The doctor set to work upon her at once, giving his orders with a quick sharpness unlike his usual placidity. Mary 'Lizabeth fetched and carried, rubbed and fanned, in speed and silence, like some wise little machine. She seemed to read his needs before he spoke them.

Presently sense and speech returned to Gran'ma Stow.

"Polly Forest," she shrilled in the ghost of her old domineering voice, "what you doin' with my best hemstitched towel? Put it 'way in the drawer. Act as though you was crazy!"

The doctor hid a smile in the shadows behind the bed.

"You're feelin' better now, ain't you, Mrs. Stow?"

"I'm a sick woman, young man! Polly, you get me my second-best cap out o' the blue chest, in the forerom chamber. This nightcap's fit to frighten the French."

Now Gilbert laughed. "Never mind your cap. You look well enough as you are."

"Shall, too, mind it! Folks'll be comin' in to call, quick as they hear 'bout my seizure, an' I ain't goin' to look like ol' Hewdie, if I be sick. Hurry up, Polly!" Already her voice was gaining compass.

Her granddaughter tied on the new headgear with tender fingers.

"There, dear, you're complete." She kissed the fat old face lovingly.

"This attack was brought onto me," the old woman announced, "by clam stew that my granddaughter forced into me last night. I view it she wanted to pizen me."

"There, there!" soothed the accused one, tucking the covers around the old neck. "I'm goin' to get you just the breakfast doctor says you can eat."

"Well, don't take all day to it. I'm holler as a horn," pronounced the amazing woman.

"You cook your grandmother's breakfast, an' I'll cook yours." Gilbert followed Polly into the kitchen. "Yes, I do know how," for Polly had murmured something. "I've boiled coffee an' fried bacon plenty o' times, an' they were good, too."

"Well," the girl conceded, with a sigh of weariness.

"Breakfast's ready, now. Come, eat!" Gilbert summoned her to the table. "I'm goin' to have some myself."

"Oh, yes, please. I forgot." All her innate hospitality blushed in her cheeks at her neglect. "I'm sort o' dazed, I guess." She leaned her head on her hand, her eyes closed.

"Poor little thing!" thought the big-hearted Westerner.

He considered her in silence; an unfair view, for her hair was uncombed, her face drawn with weariness, and her dress, a hastily donned wrapper of a dismal purple, gave her a sickly hue.

"Pretty," was his silent verdict; then, as her shining eyes opened on him: "Very pretty, but I don't seem to care for the kind."

"You eat," he urged. "You'll need your strength."

"You don't think Gran's goin' to be worse?"

"She'll be stronger every hour passes, but you'll have work to do, just the same. Where's your brother?"

Again Mary 'Lizabeth flushed.

"He's fishin' off Hatchet's."

"Likely to be back to-day?"

"I—I—guess not. The fish are bitin' good. He's had wonderful luck."

Gilbert did not comment upon this.

"I'm goin' to stop at those neighbors down below an' ask the woman to come help you."

"Widow Tallett? Don't! Gran can't bear her."

The doctor did not appear to have heard.

"I'll be back this afternoon."

He poured himself another cup of

coffee, drank it, and departed, leaving the girl with the growing sense that if the strange doctor was slow of speech, he was amazingly rapid of motion.

To himself, Gilbert reflected on his ward. Fierce and fiery, she was tricky, too; yet did ever girl look straighter into your eyes? It was like the challenge of a gun. And with her cantankerous old grandmother, she was sweetly gentle.

"Women are amazin', anyhow." He dismissed her and her whole tribe into the void places where his interest did not dwell.

The morning was growing hot; the dew on the grass was sucked up by the sun in a dancing haze. Gilbert slackened his speed and halted on his own porch, to fan himself into a cooler aspect before greeting his grandmother. Through the long window he saw a pretty, and cooling picture—the white tablecloth, the old-fashioned silver and glass, the bowl of tea roses, and his grandmother, in a thin muslin dress, worked with a flowering pattern of roses and lilies. Some one stood beside her—Theodosia Gerrish, the last touch of pleasantness, with her lilac print and pale hair.

"Why, Gil, you been out early! Who's sick?"

"Just an old lady," bowing to Theodosia, who smiled on him with a calm friendliness.

"Dosia's brought us over some o' her own special strawberries, the wild ones she's cultivated. Ain't they pretty?"

Gilbert wished he could admire them in some original fashion, but he could only echo: "Very pretty."

"I want she should take breakfast with us," Madam Cope purred on; "but she says Cap'n Gerrish is waitin'."

"Wish you'd stay," awkwardly.

"I'm obliged to you." Dosia had a wholesome voice. "But I must be step-pin' back."

"I got a basket o' eggs an' a pitcher o'

fresh buttermilk I'd love to send over to the cap'n, only Dosia can't make out to carry 'em both."

"I'll take 'em."

"That's real kind," Dosia accepted.

"Good morning, Madam Cope!"

The old lady watched the two stroll off across the lawn, with her little buttonhole of a mouth pursed into her shrewd smile.

"Dosia's a nice height for him. You don't commonly see a girl so tall. She'll make a real good wife."

Meanwhile, Gilbert was struggling to find some easy remark to make to his companion, and finding none. She did not seem to notice, walking placidly by his side. He wondered resentfully why his mind was so dry in the presence of this amiable, handsome girl. He was flooded with ideas when he met that little cat, Mary 'Lizabeth Forest. He felt a distinct pleasure in Dosia's appearance; in her good, clean print, finished off at the neck by a muslin collar scalloped in deep points; in her smoothly braided hair, and her cheerful, tranquil face.

"That's a nice color," he blurted out, glancing down at her lilac dress.

Dosia smiled.

"I like it. Folks say it fades consid'ble, but I deem you can keep one color fast as another if you show judgment in washin' it."

"That so?" helplessly.

"Will you be pleased to walk in and see father?" She turned to him on her doorsill.

"No—thank you—some other time."

He hurried away, with a foolish, red face.

Old Mrs. Stow did not mend as fast as her doctor had promised. Day after day she stayed in the great bed. Sometimes she was gloomily downhearted, and planned, usually in the dead waste of the night, her own funeral ceremonies; sometimes she was outrage-

ously cross; but always she was exasperating to the soul. The Widow Tallett, a nurse tested by fifty years of ministrations, announced to the doctor:

"If there's the beater o' Zelinda Stow in four counties, I ain't seen her."

To which Gilbert, who had employed twenty weary minutes and all his tact inducing the patient to swallow her medicine, replied with emphasis:

"An' you won't—in forty."

Mary 'Lizabeth, taking the air at the kitchen door, told the doctor, the nurse, and, in the absence of these, the chickens:

"I will not be hector'd an' blamed an' humiliated one more time, *ever!* I'll run away. *I will!*"

To which the Widow Tallett would answer: "I don't blame ye! Do!" And Gilbert would say, with his good, kind smile: "Come back soon, won't you?" The chickens never troubled to reply; they knew the value of such remarks.

Five minutes later, Mary 'Lizabeth would be bathing the sick woman's face, fanning her with long, sweeping motions, or reading aloud one of the comminatory sermons that warmed the old Calvinist's heart, all with an unflagging sweetness.

"She gets my time, Polly Forest does!" the widow, who was a free speaker, confided to Gilbert. "I'd give the ol' witch cat a dose o' pizen, I vow I would; but Polly's as pleasant spoken at two o'clock in the mornin' as if 'twas noon. That's the Stow o' it. Ye know Zelinda Millington ketched Henry Stow 'cause he was too soft-hearted to keep out o' her traps?"

Gilbert laughed. "I never heard that."

The widow narrowed her eyes at him oddly. "You didn't? Well, I ain't goin' to be the one to tell you no more." With which dark remark she stirred the gruel on the stove furiously.

"Mary 'Lizabeth will be worn out if



"That's a nice color," he blurted out, glancing down at her lilac dress.

this keeps on. The old woman has her racin' an' chasin' as if she was made o' iron," the doctor observed.

"You can say so! Last night 'twas: 'Up garret an' fetch my red shoulder shawl,' 'Over to spring an' get me a drink,' 'Down cellar see how the preserves is a-keepin'.' An' holler, if she didn't run quick 'nough, like to deafen you."

"Where is her brother Mat all this time?"

"You may ask! Over to Hatchet's Reef, fishin'. He sent word to her he was havin' a run o' fish equal to the

miraculous draft, an' couldn't come for nobody."

"You coax Mary 'Lizabeth to sleep this afternoon. She must!"

"Sleep! There ain't a corner o' this house where man nor mortal can sleep when Zelinda gets to hollerin'. If she wants a thing, there ain't nobody can fetch it but Polly."

The doctor said no more, but walked into the bedroom for a last look at the patient. She had dropped asleep, her strong old hand stretched out to grasp her granddaughter's hand, as if even in dreams she would rule her. The girl

was perched on the side of the bed in a strained attitude, her head drooping back against the footboard. She looked very small and childlike and weary. Gilbert took her free hand in both his. They had buried the hatchet silently, or perhaps called a truce, during the illness, and were on the friendly footing of trusted doctor and trusted nurse.

"Polly," using for the first time her little name, "will you come along home with me an' get a good afternoon's sleep?" he whispered.

She whispered back instantly: "I can't. Widow Tallett is bakin', an' when Gran wakes, she'll need a sight o' waitin' on."

For a minute he considered his problem. Need burnished his wits.

"Theodosia Gerrish will take your place, I know. You're worn to breakin', an' you may have to keep this up days longer. Come, now, Polly, be good."

A vivid smile crinkled over the girl's weary face, a laugh swayed her body.

"When Dosia comes in that door, I'll go out o' it," she conceded.

Gilbert had an odd impulse to smooth her hair, curling damply around her forehead, even to draw her head down on his breast. He, too, smiled, at himself as well as at her, and slipped out of the room.

Dosia was sewing on her own prim little porch, and again she seemed to Gilbert the very type of all the pretty modesties of maidenhood. He stated his need briefly, as was his wont:

"Mary 'Lizabeth Forest's worn out nursin'. I'm goin' to take her to my grandmother's to sleep. Could you come sit with old Mrs. Stow?"

Dosia answered, with her pleasant soberness: "Just as well as not." She began to roll up her work at once; then, with a little more color in her face: "Ain't Mat handy to help?"

"He keeps clear altogether—off some

place, fishin'. Family troubles appear to rest light on him."

Dosia regarded him with earnestness. "Mat ain't all folks make him out. He's more o' a man than they know."

"Ready?" Gilbert did not care to discuss the absent Mat, having his own ideas of him.

Again Dosia colored.

"You told Madam Cope yet? I would, if I was you. Old ladies ain't pleased at surprises."

Indeed, Madam Cope was far from pleased. Her pretty cheeks burned a deep pink; her blue eyes glittered steel-wise; only her voice stayed honey-sweet.

"Ain't there any neighbor willin' to give the girl house room, without her trapesin' 'long over here?"

"I don't know the neighbors, Gran," patiently.

"Well, I do." Madam Cope made rapid passes across her black silk apron, smoothing it out very taut, a sign of extreme agitation. "There's the Widow Tallett's own house an' Jabez Dole's an' Perenthia Jane Corner's an'——"

"I want you should let her come here, Gran, an' sleep in your cool west room." There was a certain steadiness in her grandson's voice that made the old woman remember rare times when her husband had won his way.

Her tone changed: "There, dear, bring her whenever you've a mind to. I just thought 'twas far to come."

The shadows stretched long across the grass; the sun sank below the rim of the world; a silver mist that muffled sound and twisted vision crept up from the sea. Yet Mary 'Lizabeth did not come.

The Widow Tallett creaked in to whisper:

"Clip 'long home, now, Dosia. I'll set by her."

Dosia thought of her father's overdue supper, and, gathering her muslin

skirts close around her, took the path through the back pastures. Just at the edge of the pasture, where the path ended and the highway began, a man stepped out of a clump of bushes.

"Evenin', Dosia," he said, and laughed in a wonderful ring of sound.

Dosia's calm blood leaped tumultuously.

"Evenin', Mat. When you get back from fishin'?"

Mat drew up close to her. "Glad to see me?"

"Goin' to your grandmother's?"

"You heard about my new business?" It seemed a game of twenty questions, and both ended in a laugh.

"Say, Dosia, I'm goin' to own the prettiest little schooner you ever saw, an' go coastin' here."

"Why, Mat! When?"

"Right off! Listen: You're a captain's daughter. Should you like to go coastin' in the *Rachel Straight*?"

He had come very close to her, so that his dark eyes seemed to burn into hers. The night was hot and still, the tink-a-tank of, a sheep bell the one sound in the soft quiet.

"I've always liked sailin'," primly.

Mat bent down in a quick curve and kissed her.

"There! Now you know. You ain't mad, are you, Dosia?" For she had shrunk away, covering her face with her hands. "Look here, pretty, I've always thought more o' you than any girl livin', since you wore tiers an' sat 'cross the aisle from me in school. An' now, why, I—— Say, Dosia, you like me, too, don't you, a little? For I'm just all over in love with you."

"I—I—— Oh, Mat—how can I——" The even-going Theodosia was swung clear out of her orbit.

"That's all right, then." He kissed her again. "We'll be wedded in early fall, so you can cruise some with me, an'—— Hark! Some woman's comin'. Don't you tell a soul you've seen

me. I haven't time to go up to the house, an' I don't want Polly to know I've been home."

He leaped the fence and disappeared around the turn, just as Polly herself stepped up to the stile. She had heard voices, seen Gilbert—as she thought—hurry away, and now faced Dosia.

"How's Gran?" quietly.

"She's better—— I—mean—asleep. Widow Tallett's with her." Dosia brushed past in much agitation, not waiting to hear the other's thanks.

"So Doctor Gil is goin' a-courtin' already. I didn't think he was that kind." Polly's lip curled scornfully.

The night was marked for more happenings, however. When Mary 'Lizabeth returned home, she found the Widow Tallett standing in the middle of the kitchen floor, a stone jug in her hand, dismay in her face.

"Not a drop o' yeast in the house, an' to-morrow bread bakin'! The nearest house you'll get it will be Aunt Phoebe Riggs', an' that's near a mile, if you go by the turnpike."

"I'll clip it through the back pastures. 'Twill shorten it by half." Polly pulled herself up with slow grace.

"Ain't it kin' o' doubbersome in them back lots?"

"Who's afraid such a night o' moonlight as this?" She smiled valiantly upon the widow.

Out in the still pastures, where the shadows of tree and bush were twisted into distorted forms and where little, furtive sounds of beast and bird squacked and skulked at her feet, the girl's courage oozed out slowly. She wished, as she climbed the stile by Otis' Mills, a building long deserted, and started across the old bridge, that she had chosen the more open, if longer, way. She remembered tales of tramps—rare wanderers into Pettipaug in those far-off times—who made the bat-

tered structure their haunt. She had always laughed at these tales, but now she found no humor in them.

Certainly something stirred in the dark recesses of the mill, a board snapped, a stone rolled. Mary 'Lizabeth, in the fairway of the moon, hesitated, hung a second undecided whether to go on or back, then hurried forward, realizing that to return would now be as difficult as to press forward. She cast one glance over her shoulder. Surely that shadow by the mill door was a new one! Had it moved? Her steps quickened into the grass-grown track that once had been a beaten road to the mill. Some one was following her; those were no chance sounds of the night, but steps. She dared not look back to be positive. Her part was to hasten on without running. The man—if man it were—might not have seen her. Then she remembered the clear light on the bridge, and knew that a refuge of straw. At any rate, he must not think she feared him.

The path was rough and brier tangled. She stumbled, caught her dress, and once nearly fell. The steps rang solidly behind her now. A cough, not muffled, reached her. For an instant she thought to wheel and face whatever vague peril might be behind her, and end it by out-fronting it. Then the lonesome pastures, the ring of dark woods, the lateness of the hour—past nine—frightened her. She quickened again into her flying walk. Another moment and all such hopes were scattered, for a voice, hoarse and thick, called:

"Hold on, sister. I'll see you home."

Then, indeed, Mary 'Lizabeth ran, with all the speed her light body and stout heart could summon. Ran, tearing her skirts, scratching her hands, bruising her feet, but keeping up her race to the fence that bounded the road. The tramp did not follow at her speed, indifferent to her, or sure of capture;

his feet sounded fainter in the distance.

At the fence, she paused to gather her forces for the climb down into the road, and to ease her laboring breath. She could make the Riggs Farm, now, just around the bend, and be safe. Over the stone-and-rail fence she scrambled, and down the bank. The loose earth betrayed her, sliding away under her, and pitching her heavily to the road.

For a long minute she lay in a stunned heap. She struggled to her feet, murmuring dizzily: "I'll lie down when I get to Aunt Phoebe's." Then, as her brain cleared, she looked around her, with a sinking at her heart like a bodily pain. She had, in her fear, lost the straight trail somewhere back in the pastures, and had come out on a deserted stretch of road, away above the farm.

Mary 'Lizabeth set her teeth in her lips to stop their trembling, and started instantly down the road. Still too shaken to run, she walked fast. Perhaps the tramp had not followed her, after all. Then she heard a lunge down the bank behind her and a shout:

"Wait, you! I want company."

She cast a despairing glance around the moonlit road, and listened in the night hush. No sign or sound of human nearness comforted her.

"You shan't get me!" aloud, cool, now, as ice. "That's sure!"

With what could she fight? Where hide? At that, her brain focused the bridge over Rackett River, and her feet, impatiently obedient, leaped forward. The river was a small stream that rushed with sound and fury down through the pastures, and so on to the river. Where it crossed the road, an old bridge, raised high on wooden girders, offered passage to horse and wagon. As a child, Mary 'Lizabeth had often played with the Riggs children under this bridge, climbing about on the rafters. If she could make this bridge and

slip under it before she was seen, she trusted she could hide herself in safety.

Gripping all her strength into one last fiery pulse of speed, she darted around the big rock that sentined the bridge, leaped down the bank in among the mud and reeds of the river's edge, and stepped into the water. Very cautiously, so as not to splash, she waded through the shallows, fumbled in the darkness for the cracks in the beams once familiar to her fingers, and half crawled, half swung herself up under the floor of the bridge.

She heard her enemy's steps on the bridge, heard him whistle and call, then laugh.

"Hidin', are ye? I'll smoke ye out!" He jumped down the bank just where she had made her spring, and peered around under the edge of the bridge. The moonlight showed him distinctly, a big, heavy fellow, with a bundle on a stick over his shoulder. His face was blurred, but his voice was both jeering and menacing. A realization of her position, crowded up against the boards in the darkness, if the tramp should discover her hiding there, swept the girl in a nauseating wave. She clenched her hands into the beams to keep herself quiet. The tramp could not see into the gloom, and did not understand how shallow the river was at its edge.

"You ain't there, without you're a bat," he remarked, evidently believing her near enough to hear him; "but I'll find ye soon enough."

He beat the bushes with his stick up and down each side of the bridge, then he crossed it and searched the other side. Sometimes he called out coarse jokes to her, sometimes he swore horribly. Mary 'Lizabeth shrank close to the rafters, and prayed ceaselessly for help, although from what source it could possibly come on this back road of the hills she could not think.

After a long search, the tramp called out loudly:

"I'm goin' up on the bridge to smoke my pipe. I'll be there when you come out."

The girl eased her cramped position, and listened to his steps, hollow on the bridge, die away in the dust of the road. Had he gone, really? She waited what seemed hours to her, aching with the strain of holding on, weary to exhaustion with her race and fight.

"Mary 'Lizabeth Forest, you can't hang on here all night," she reasoned. "You'll drop into the river, an' Gran'll want you, an' get frightened, an' there'll be a hurrah-boys-fire-in-the-mountain time to the house." She set her lips in a steady line. "I know he's gone. I'm comin' out."

In spite of her bold words, her spine crawled as if ice had been dropped down it; her forehead beaded with moisture; she had to lock her teeth together to keep them from clacking. Inch by inch she crept down, waded through the water, and pulled herself up the bank. The road lay white and still and empty. She walked forward in the direction of Aunt Phoebe Riggs' farm; only a few minutes, now, and she would be within calling distance of it. She drew a long breath of relief that was like a sob.

Then her knees sank under her, her breath caught in her throat, her heart flung itself against her side as if it would tear loose from her body. The tramp was coming around the corner upon her. The extremity of her desperation gave courage to her. She flung up her head and walked straight by him up the road.

"Hold on, now!" The hateful, jeering voice was close to her; a hand struck her shoulder a heavy blow.

She swung on him instantly.

"Don't you dare touch me! Keep back, I say!" Her voice was as steady as iron. Weaponless, she was ready to fight to the last ditch.

The tramp gave a lurching move-



Something from the air hurled down upon him. He fell flat in the road.

ment toward her. Then something from the air hurled down upon him. He fell flat in the road. His arm knocked against her as he went down, and sent her reeling backward. Somebody caught her in a steady hold.

"Polly!"

"Oh, Gil! Oh, the tramp! Don't leave me!" She clung to him like a frantic child, all her courage gone.

"I've been hidin' for hours. I thought he was gone— Oh, don't leave me!"

"No, no," he soothed her, turning, with her still in his arms, to see what his enemy might be up to.

The tramp had found the weight of that fist enough. He had scrambled agilely to his feet, and was running at a great pace up the road toward the woods. Gilbert made a motion to follow him, then stopped at Mary 'Lizabeth's piteous repetition: "Don't leave me!"

"I'll keep hold o' you till I leave you inside your own door," he comforted her, his big hand stroking her hair. "Where'd you meet him?"

Mary 'Lizabeth, her face hidden in his breast, laughed and sobbed and trembled and tried to tell him her story.

"How you come here yourself?"

"Oh, a patient over by Candlelight Hill. Both my horses had to be shod, so I walked. Shan't we be goin', now?" Very gently he drew her around in the direction of her home.

"I'm so tired!" sighed the girl faintly.

"Poor little girl!" He brushed his lips over her hair. "Poor little Polly!" He kept his arm around her, and so began to walk toward the village.

Polly, too tired to think or care, walked in step with him, her head against his shoulder. After the strain and terror, this big, tender man seemed kinder than the race of mortals; from a horror of fear, he had lifted her to peace.

When they reached her own door, she slipped from him.

"You're so good," very softly. "Thank you!"

Gilbert strode home across the fields, his heart beating queerly. His arms seemed still to hold a small, quivering figure, his lips to touch soft hair. Unheeding, he almost ran over Dosia Gerish standing by her own door.

"Now, Gilbert," in her tranquil voice, for nothing really excited Dosia, "ain't there moonlight enough for you to see your friends?"

"Well, Dosia, I'm sorry I ran you down. I didn't expect you to be up so late."

"It ain't much after ten. Father's restless, an' I been talkin' to him. How Mis' Zelinda Stow?"

"Gettin' on well, now. Look here, Dosia, you know what sets my grandmother against the whole Stow family? She can't stand the name o' one o' them."

"Why, Gilbert, didn't you ever hear your grandmother was tokened to Henry Stow, Mary 'Lizabeth's grandfather?"

"No!"

"She thought the world an' all o' him, folks say, but Zelinda Millington

was possessed to have him, an' she got him, at the very altar steps, almost."

"Poor little Gran!"

"She was just broken-hearted, but afterward she wedded your grandfather an' was a happy wife," she comforted him. "Then Mis' Stow's daughter, Mary 'Lizabeth, was tokened to your father."

"What?"

"She snapped that off sudden, by runnin' away with Mathias Forest—though what she could see in that easy-go-easy man! An' they were father an' mother to Mat an' Polly. I deem your grandmother can't forget old wrongs."

"It's amazin'," he told her, his deep voice low in his wonder. "I got to go home to think it over."

What he thought was: "Three times, an' succeed! If she an' I could do what the other two couldn't!"

He lay wide awake in the moonlight a long time, and when he turned over to sleep, he muttered: "It's destiny, that's it!"

A great moon, blazing in a bare sky, poured a flood of white light over the pastures that sloped down to the river, a streak of silver between black edges. The night was without stir of wind, the long, blue shadows of the elms hung motionless across the lane, the boom of frogs sounded loud from the marsh, the tang of sweet fern ripening mingled with the perfume of roses and honeysuckle.

Mary 'Lizabeth, having sung her grandmother to sleep, stole out into the lane, and from there down toward the river. Her body was weary to breaking under the strain of many days of toil and nights of watching, but her heart leaped within her with a curious excitement. She felt no loneliness, but as if strong, warm arms held her close. She heard in the silence a big, kind voice murmur down into her hair. No

one since she could remember had ever protected Mary 'Lizabeth, or cared especially if she were cold or frightened or hurt. Ever since she could run on her quick little feet, they had been used for others' needs, till they, as well as she, had grown to believe that she couldn't shiver or tremble or grow heartsick.

She leaned her arms on the bar of the low fence that divided the pastures from the river, and her head on her arms. How queer river and sky looked, viewed thus half upside down, she thought vaguely; and wasn't it unusual not to see a single star in all the blue span of heaven?

Then her thoughts slipped back to her adventure of the night before. It was a strange old story in the village annals, surely—her Grandfather Stow tokened to wed old Madam Cope—only, of course, she had been Henrietta Gilbert then, and must have been lovely in the face—and jilting her in that sudden way for grandmother—no, Zelinda Millington—and then Gilbert Cope, madam's only child, tokened to her mother, Mary 'Lizabeth Stow, and she to throw him over for Mathias Forest, and now— Now, what? She hid her face in her hands, and found it burning hot.

Shaking herself straight, she said aloud:

"Moonshinin' here won't rest me any great sight. I'll take me home to bed."

But again the magic of the night touched her blood. She wandered farther along the lane, moist scents of bruised ferns, aromatic herbs, and wood violets rising about her skirts, her mind full of one voice, forever whispering in her ears: "Poor little girl! Poor little Polly!" Suddenly big tears filled her eyes, like those children shed, her lips trembled into a sob. She wanted to lay her head down into the hollow of a big, warm shoulder and be held there, protected and loved.

Her aimless steps had brought her down to the end of the pasture, where a spit of sand ran out into the river under a great elm. The roots of the tree had spread themselves into a kind of platform, on which some long-gone Pettipaugite had built a rough seat, prized by those who cared for the view. Here now sat two people, a man and a girl, the former hidden behind the girl, yet not wholly. His coat sleeve showed his arm curved round her white waist. The moon flung a broad beam on her face, and in the stillness her mild voice sounded clear. Polly stopped short.

"Dosia Gerrish an'——"

Dosia's voice filled in the guess:

"Gilbert, you will——"

The unseen listener heard only those three words; then, noiseless as some little animal of the woods in the presence of its enemy, she stole away toward her own home. The tears in her eyes were burned dry by the fires of shame that she should ever have cherished such vaporings; tender dependence was steeled into rage against Dosia and Gilbert, and, most of all, against herself.

Out of hearing, she tramped through the lane, snapping twigs, hustling stones with her feet, comforted by the harsh sounds. Her house looked hot and sleepless, so she sat down on the kitchen steps and stared in dumb pain at the grotesque night forms of old dooryard friends—the currant bushes, the washing bench, the rain barrel. She heard the clock strike nine, then ten, and told herself sullenly she would sit there all night, if she pleased.

"Polly!" a cautious sound.

"Mat!" in an alarmed whisper.

A limber figure leaped the wall. Polly threw her arms around him in a passionate embrace. He, at least, was all her own.

"Why, Mattie, I thought you were to New London."

"Just back, in Lot's boat." He re-

turned her kisses mildly. "I've bought my schooner."

"What!"

"Don't holler so, child," testily. Mat was always cross when he was in the wrong. "Yes, sir. I own her, from truck to keel. Twenty-five dollars down an' two hundred an' seventy-five in thirty days, on my note. Lot an' his brother indorsed it."

"You haven't got any three hundred dollars!"

"I will have to-morrow. That ol' screw, Cope, may think he's goin' to clamp our own money up in his fist, but I reckon he'll open up when he learns about the note."

"He's awful set," drearily.

"Well, you got to wring it out o' him, sis, somehow," coldly. "I'm in for it, now, for look here!" Mat laughed importantly. "I'm tokened to a girl."

"Who? When? Without any money?" Polly started to her feet in wild bewilderment.

"Sit tight." He drew her down beside him, his arm about her, his hand playing with a curl of her hair.

His sister was speechless, whirling through her mind the names of every Pettipaug maiden, for to all had this light o' love paid court.

"It's Lot's cousin over to New London, Rebecca Jewel," she cried, in triumph. "That's why you've haunted Lot so this spring, an' been always hikin' off to New London. I thought 'twas the boat, but——"

"Oh, you're smart!" broke in her brother, with his teasing laugh. "But look-a-here, the point's that three hundred. An' you'd better make it four while you're at it, so as I'll have some on hand to start with."

Mary 'Lizabeth did not answer, stricken into silence by a vast loneliness that seemed to rise with the river mist and steal across the pastures, through the garden, and up to her till its chill arms coiled around her heart,

numbing its high beat. Not even Mat! All alone in her troubles and her joys!

Mat shook her gently. "Goin' to see the old coot to-morrow?"

She turned on him with a flare of spirit. "See him yourself! It's your boat an' your girl! I wouldn't hide behind a petticoat!"

"Stop that!" he flared back. "I'll rout him out at six o'clock to-morrow. No, I've got to catch the tide back to New London. I'll go see ol' wild-an'-woolly-West now!" He leaped to his feet.

"You can't. It's midnight!" It was actually fifteen minutes past ten, but in Pettipaug that was the same thing.

"He's a doctor. He's used to bein' hauled out o' bed any hour." Mat jerked himself free of her arms, and was gone in a running leap.

"He's crazy!" mourned the girl. "I'm crazy. All our family are crazy. Gilbert Cope's father was a lucky man not to get tied up with us."

Her head on her knees, she drowsed off in the still heat, till a hand shaking her roused her. Staring up into Mat's eyes, dark with anger and disappointment, she read his news. Instantly all impatience was forgotten. She pulled him down beside her and drew his head against her slender shoulder.

"Dearie, he wouldn't?"

"Said he didn't have it for me—the interest on somethin' or other hadn't come in. Said he'd buy the schooner himself for me an' let me work it off in easy payments."

"That's fair."

"Fair! You wait! He won't let me sail in her till she's all paid for, every last penny. Why, that'd maybe take me till next June."

"It's only a year!"

"An' me wait a year to wed! I want to take my bridal trip in her in September."

"My country, Mat!" Then she

quelled her sharpness. "Dear, does he know about the girl?"

"Told him."

"An' he said?"

"Was too young to wed, anyhow."

"Did you get all heated up with him?"

"Knocked him down, a'most, in his own dooryard."

"Mattie! What stopped you?"

Mat laughed out in boyish humor.

"He did. He knocked me down instead. Say, Polly, he's a good sort, all right, if he is wooden-headed over that money. He never lost his hold on himself once, never gave me one black word, but when I jumped for him, he closed in with his left so fast I saw stars before I knew what hit me."

"He's a—a—brute! Refusin' us our money, then knockin' you down!"

"Come, come, Polly, have sense. He had a right to say no if he views it that way, an' if he hadn't 've hit first, I'd have laid him out," remonstrated the boy, whose nature, if fiery, was easily cooled.

His more stable sister shook her head, her hands knotted into tight fists.

"Besides," went on the amazing youth, "you've got to roll yourself in sugar for him. I want you to go first thing in the mornin' an' coax him round."

"I won't! I can't!"

They argued, and, as always, Mat's threats and entreaties won.

The morning was the first of July, and of a stifling heat rare in the valley of the Connecticut. The sun, a copper disk burning through a saffron fog, sucked up every drop of moisture from the ground; the leaves hung as motionless as if painted against the sky; the very cattle had ceased to graze, lying under the trees, or wading knee-deep into the river.

"Awful tejus day, ain't it?" Ann Jane, Madam Cope's old servant,

greeted Mary 'Lizabeth from the porch, where she sat stoning cherries.

"Awful," repeated the girl listlessly. She had slept little the night before; now she looked a flower of the heat, lax and fevered.

"Good morning, dear." Madam Cope stepped through the long French window. Even on this weary morning, she was fresh and crisp in her white wrapper with fluted muslin frills at the neck and wrist, her silver hair, and the delicate color in her cheeks. "You're stirrin' early. Your grandmother worse?"

"No'm, she's gainin'. I want to see the doctor—for—myself."

"Well, there, you do look peaked. Come right in an' drink some o' my strawberry shrub." The cold blue eyes, traveling over hot, dusty Polly, made of her a draggled, haggard creature.

Too tired to resist, she followed the old woman into the clock room, with its cool green lights and bowls of flowers.

"Gilbert's got a patient just now, but he'll be free real soon," she purred on as the girl sipped the shrub. "I heard a story how Gilbert deems you a remarkable good nurse."

"Does he?" wearily. "He saved my grandmother's life, I s'pose."

Madam Cope did not mention that her grandson had never even spoken of the girl to her, her information having been the inexplicable rumor of village life that sifts abroad the secrets of all hearts.

Polly stood up uneasily. "I guess the patient's goin'," she murmured, and started across the hall. As she stepped out, she heard Madam Cope say:

"Ann Jane, bring the cherries round this side o' the porch. It's cooler here, an' I'll help you stone 'em."

"Wants to hear what I'm goin' to say to her precious grandson," sniffed the girl. "Who cares?"

The young doctor's "Come in" followed quick on her knock, but when

she stepped into the room, she found an old farmer just leaving it.

"I'm obliged to you, doctor," he was saying, "for bankin' that five hundred dollars for me. I don't know when I shall be situated so as I can get up to Middletown."

"That's all right, Mr. Brown. I can't go myself for a few days, but your money will be secure here in my safe."

He shook hands with the old man and turned to the girl with his kind smile.

"Good mornin', Mary 'Lizabeth. Sit here by the window where it's cool."

Mary 'Lizabeth had stiffened herself with an iron resolve to be entirely calm and courteous. Her family had been violent enough already, and with poor results.

"Mat told me he had a talk with you last night," she began mildly.

Gilbert no longer smiled.

"I haven't any money now to give him"—he entered the subject directly—"an' if I had, I don't think he ought to begin such a venture till he's older an' has proved himself better fitted for it."

She wondered if he meant the venture of business or of marriage.

"He's give 'em his note," still mild.

"I'll take the boat off his hands an' he can work it out."

"He won't wait, Gilbert. I know him better'n you." Her voice was gaining stress.

"If he hasn't the money, he'll have to."

"He won't. He tol' me this mornin' he was goin' to have her ready to sail in thirty—days."

"He can't if he doesn't own her," patiently.

"He will own her," sharply; then, struggling for calm: "You see, he's promised to pay in thirty days, an' he will, too. He always keeps his word. An' he's promised to sail in that time, an' he'll do that, too."

"Has he any other way to raise the money?"

She made a great effort to hold on to herself.

"He don't need any *other* way. You'll give it to him."

A long pause, then a steady, hard "No."

Polly crushed her hands together in her lap.

"Please, please, Gilbert! It means everything to Mat. Please!"

Gilbert's face set in an iron resolve.

"I haven't it, Polly, to give."

"There it is right before you." She pointed to the roll of bills still lying on the table.

He rose and locked them in his safe, opening it with a key attached to a bunch which he took from his pocket.

"That is not my money nor yours."

"Please give it to me. You can get more to replace it when you go to Middletown." Her voice was touchingly humble.

He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and, because he suffered, his own voice was hard.

"No, Mary 'Lizabeth, I will not."

She leaped to her feet, all softness burned away by the fires of her outraged pride.

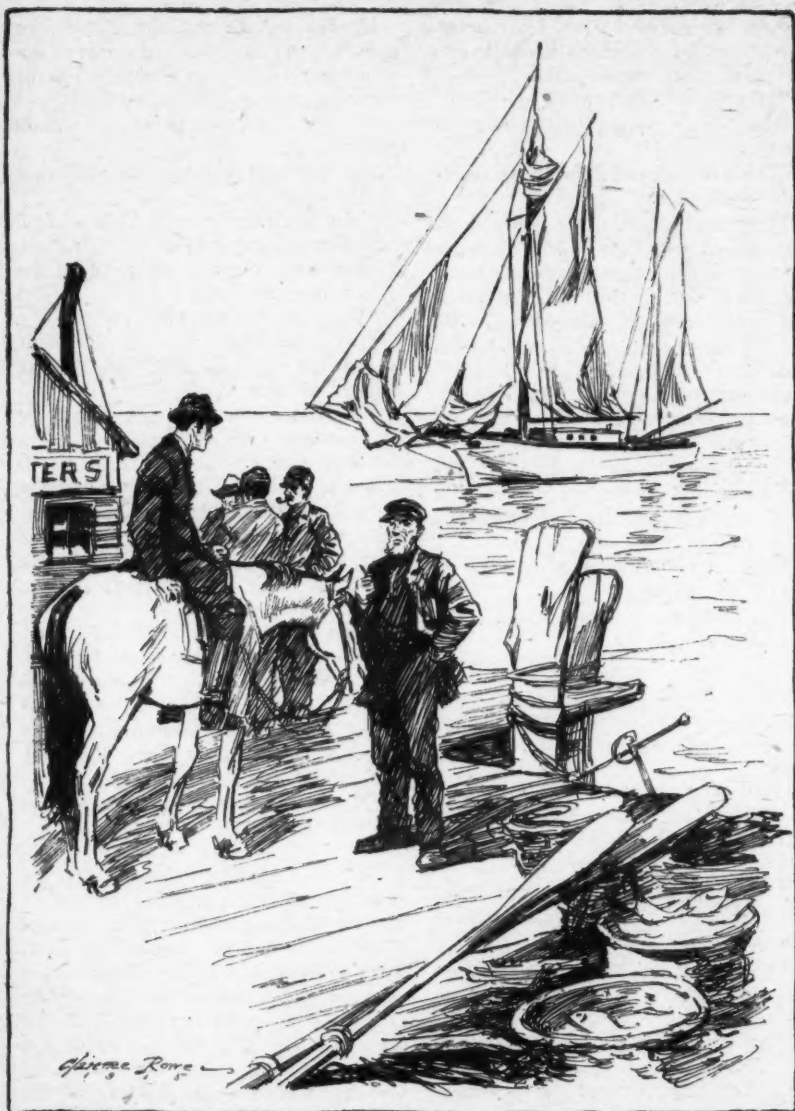
"Keep it, then! Lock it in your old safe! I give you fair warning I'll have it yet. You shan't spoil Mat's life an' mine by your meanness!"

As she darted from the room, a zigzag of lightning shot through the sky, and a crash of thunder, as if in tragic amen to her vow.

The young doctor drew his hands from his pocket, letting the bunch of keys fall to the floor, and sprang through the long window after the girl. He caught up with her by the gate.

"Polly," with extreme earnestness, "come back to my house. There's goin' to be a thunderstorm, an' I won't have you out in it."

As he spoke, another flash cleft the



"Pretty, doctor, ain't she? It's the 'Rachel Straight' from New London."

sky, and great drops began to splash on the flagstones. He swung his arm around the girl and pushed her before him at a rushing pace up the walk, onto the porch, and into his office.

"Stay there!" he panted.

Ann Jane's gaunt height loomed in the door.

"Madam's got one o' her heart spells, here on the porch."

Forgotten in her corner Mary 'Lizabeth sat, while Gilbert and the old servant carried the stricken woman through the office into her bedroom behind it. She was conscious, for she gave the girl a queer stare, but desperately blue and waxen looking. Mary 'Lizabeth could hear doors slammed, feet running, and every now and then Gilbert's deep voice.

The shower ceased as abruptly as it had risen, and the girl stole out into the kitchen, where Abel, the hired man, had taken refuge.

"You know how Madam Cope is, Abel?" she asked.

The hired man, a lank, long-jawed Yankee, grinned.

"She's come through toler'ly. I notice she 'most generally does. Hot weather an' thunderstorms is apt to upset her—them, an' not gettin' her own way."

He cocked his eye at the girl, who, in a confusion she could not fathom, backed out of the kitchen, murmuring:

"I'm real glad she ain't serious."

"Oh, she'll be in bed a spell," Abel assured her, "if it's only so she can keep folks a-waitin' on her hand an' foot."

As Mary 'Lizabeth hurried through the yard, she met a panting boy on a foam-wet horse.

"Cap'n Sam Mylan, 'cross the river, got crushed by a tree," he shouted to her. "Tell doctor to hurry all he knows. The ferry's waitin' for him."

She found time to think, even in her rage: "Poor Gilbert, he won't get back

from there till night. A doctor does have it awful hard."

To her amazement, Mat, whom she had left in a state of angry despondency, met her halfway home whistling "Come, Lasses and Lads."

"Well, Polly, squeezed ol' pillbox dry?"

She told him in a composed gloom:

"He won't."

"Just like him. Ol' cock o' the walk!" Still Mat continued to smile. "Say, sis, let him hang onto it. I've raised the wind some place else."

"Where? Not Gran!"

"Lord, no! Don't you fret. It's come by honest, an' all safe here." He slapped his side.

"Mathias Forest, you got to tell me all 'bout that money!"

"Now, now!" He caught her hands and clapped them together. "You're Zelinda's granddaughter, all right, bossy little trick! I'll tell you in fourteen days. Till then you can whistle." He freed her with a great push and set off toward the wharf.

"You can't shake 'me off like that!" She followed his limber strides with long, swinging steps. "Where you to now?"

"Lot's goin' to take me over to New London to buy her. Then I'll fetch her home."

"Maybe Lot knows." She kept on at his side.

It seemed to Gilbert that day that the township of Pettipaug had set out to test the skill and endurance of its new doctor. He had not reached his door, after a long ride to and from Cap'n Sam Mylan, when an excited woman claimed him for her son down on the Turkey Hill Road, who had fallen out of his hay mow. And from there he was summoned miles back into the country for a child caught under a mill wheel.

He spent what was left of the night

with the child's parents, and jogged home in the morning, man and horse unkempt and weary. As he passed the wharf, he saw a knot of people examining a white-sailed boat, and although he knew nothing of rigging or lines, the Pettipaugh tar in his blood urged him to look, too.

"Pretty, doctor, ain't she?" remarked a man against whom his horse nuzzled. "It's the *Rachel Straight*, from New London."

"Very," without committing himself to precise praises. "Who owns her?"

"Mat Forest just bought her an' sailed her over by moonlight."

"Forest!"

"Yes, sir. Bought an' paid for," struck in another man. "I witnessed the bill o' sale myself last night. I sailed back with Mat. My name's Lot Beck-with."

"You indorsed Forest's note, didn't you?"

"The note's destroyed. Mat paid the money down in full."

Gilbert started to speak, then his eyes fell upon Mary 'Lizabeth standing close to the boat. Her back was to him, but as if his eyes had compelling power, she turned and met his gaze full in the face. She colored deep, and—or so Gilbert thought—threw him a glance piteously appealing. He would not stand there discussing her affairs with this stranger. He edged his horse in close to her.

"Mornin', Mary 'Lizabeth."

"Mornin'." He was sure of the appeal now. "How's Madam Cope?"

At this thrust of duty, Gilbert pulled up on his reins.

"I'm just goin' to see now. Look here, Mary 'Lizabeth. You forgive me about that money now?"

Actual fear leaped in her eyes. "Why, I—"

Her answer was lost, for his horse backed sharply. He rode off, pondering.

"Did she corral that money for that young buck some way she's afraid to tell me, or is it just the mad o' yesterday hangin' over?"

Madam Cope, in bed, looked very remote and fair and fragile, her spunglass hair loose on her pillow, her transparent hands clasped meekly on her breast, her expression of gentle saintliness upon her face.

"Why, Gran," her grandson exclaimed, after he had examined her, "your heart's goin' strong as a clock! How she sleep, Mrs. Tallett?"

The widow, brought over from Grandma Stow's, answered briskly:

"Pretty as a babe. Never stirred all night."

Madam's lips curled in a sly smile, which her grandson answered. He had marked the widow's own powers of sleep.

"She's growin' hard o' hearin'," the sick woman whispered, as the nurse left the room, "but she's a faithful, good creature."

"We'll have you up this afternoon," Gilbert went on cheerfully.

Gloom drooped over madam. "Oh, Gillie, I ain't got strength to lift a finger, you might say. I feel to lie here always, I'm so weak. Don't you go to roust me up, for I ain't able to bear it."

"There, dear," he soothed her as if she were a baby, "you shall lie here long as you want."

He still considered the case of Mat and his boat, and by indirection reached the money confided to himself by the farmer.

"I'm tired as a dog, but if I don't take that money to the Middletown Bank right now, old Brown won't get in on his July interest." He glanced at his watch. "I reckon I can eat dinner an' make it through to the junction for the afternoon train."

He turned into his office, bent over his safe, then hesitated with a puzzled frown.

"My keys! I remember lockin' the money up, but they ain't in my pocket." He searched on the desk and table; then his glance caught their glitter where they lay on the floor by the window. "Must have dropped them when I ran for Polly," he reasoned correctly. He swung open the door of the safe, pulled out the roll of money just where he had placed it, and counted it perfunctorily. Then he counted it again.

"He gave me five hundred dollars—I counted 'em," he muttered. "But there ain't only two hundred here!"

He pried all around the safe, then took out the contents, shaking each paper, opening each book, all the time knowing his care futile, for the roll had been bound by a thick elastic band. Then he searched the whole room inch by inch.

"Some one took it." He rose to his feet after an hour's search. "Who?"

Who knew that the money was in his safe? Only the farmer and he himself. No, his grandmother and Ann Jane on the porch—and Mary 'Lizabeth. He dropped the first two at once, for the old servant had been in the family fifty years. Remained Mary 'Lizabeth. She had known the money was there. She had been alone in the office an hour while all the household had been absorbed elsewhere. She had claimed the three hundred dollars as her right. She had told him she would steal it. She—ah, that brought a twinge!—habitually tricked her old grandmother. She had given him a strange look that morning when he had heard the story of the boat's purchase.

It was all conclusive proof. Against this array he had only his illogical, deep conviction: "She did not do it." Then could Mat have been told of the money by her? He started for the wharf at once, to see if Mat could prove an alibi. Five minutes' talk with Lot Beckwith informed him that Mat had sailed the day before just as the storm cleared.

Had his sister come down to see him off? Why, yes, she had, and she and he had been in pretty sharp talk, too; at least she had. Mat had just laughed.

Gilbert returned home and questioned all the household searchingly as to their comings and goings in his absence. There was no smallest clew to any person who could have entered his office. The fact that only three hundred of the five was gone twisted the tangle tighter, for an ordinary tramp would have taken all.

Gilbert sat down to his now cold dinner, sullen from bewilderment.

"She didn't take it." He thudded out the words doggedly.

After dinner he went in to see his grandmother again. Even her placid pool had rippled to the household stir.

"'Melie Tallett says you've lost a sum o' money out o' your safe, dear?" she questioned, caressing his hot hand with her two cool ones.

"She oughtn't to worry you, Gran," inwardly cursing the garrulous widow.

"It's dreadful kind o' mysterious, Gil. There wasn't a soul in the office the whole o' yesterday, for I caught every sound in the house. My ears are cute as a cat's, an' I sleep so light a straw blowin' wakes me."

"You go to sleep now, dear."

"You don't suspicion Mary 'Lizabeth Forest, do you?"

"No!"

Madam's blue eyes stabbed his averted face with a dagger glance. Her voice was honeysweet, her rosebud mouth was pursed into her little formal smile. Gilbert loosened her hands gently and looked down on her in wonder. Fifty years ago jilted and still bitter against any of her lover's blood!

"You drop the whole business out o' your mind, Gran, dear," he urged. "It'll turn out right."

His shadow had just lifted from the bed when Ann Jane opened the door to say:

"A visitor to see you. You want she should come in?"

"Certainly." Madam pulled the lace frills down over her hands and patted the violet bow in her cap.

There entered timidly Mary 'Lizabeth, a mold of pink jelly in one hand and a bunch of forget-me-nots in the other.

"I'm real sorry you're sick, Madam Cope," she murmured shyly. "I thought maybe you could eat some jelly. It's made after grandma's private receipt. An' I brought you my forget-me-nots. They don't grow in any other garden."

The visit was a triumph of Mary 'Lizabeth's contrition over her pride; she felt that she had used Gilbert hardly, and was offering oblations to his grandmother, who, she knew, abhorred her. Her cheeks were a deep rose, her clear eyes burned like flame, her lips parted over her quick breath.

The little creature in the bed saw standing there, in his lusty strength, the lover of her youth, who once had wooed her with just such eyes, and her waxen face tinged a faint pink, a reflection of the girl's color, and her hands trembled among the laces.

"Sit down, dear," in her voice of honey. "You're a sweet girl to think o' a poor, old, sick woman."

Mary 'Lizabeth sat down awkwardly, to meet the questions Madam Cope heaped upon her. Twist and writhe as she would, escape was impossible. Her innocent courage was no mate for that old adroitness.

"So your brother Mat has got him a new boat, an' is goin' coastin' in her?"

"Why, he's just bought it!" amazedly.

"Oh, I hear the news, if I do lie abed." Little madam laughed her rustle of sound. "That's a considerable important event to Pettipaug. I'd be liable to learn o' it."

"Yes'm," helplessly.

"I hope he ain't invested too big a sum o' money in it, if 'tis so the business don't eventuate well."

"I don't— He—thinks—she's a bargain."

"Well, I trust he's right. Gilbert wouldn't let him have the money if he didn't think well o' it. Two hundred dollars the price, you say?"

Mary 'Lizabeth, who skipped lightly over the verities to her own grandmother, could not palter with Gilbert's.

"It was three hundred."

"Was! That's just the sum Gilbert lost out o' his safe. Three hundred dollars! It's a mystery that none can fathom."

The girl stared at her with wide eyes, and Madam Cope, with a slow relish in her distress, poured out the story of the lost money to the dregs.

"The knowledge of it lies among Ann Jane, Gilbert, an' you an' me," she ended, with a smile of special sweetness. "An' I guess we can't any o' us throw much light."

Mary 'Lizabeth rose with a whitening face.

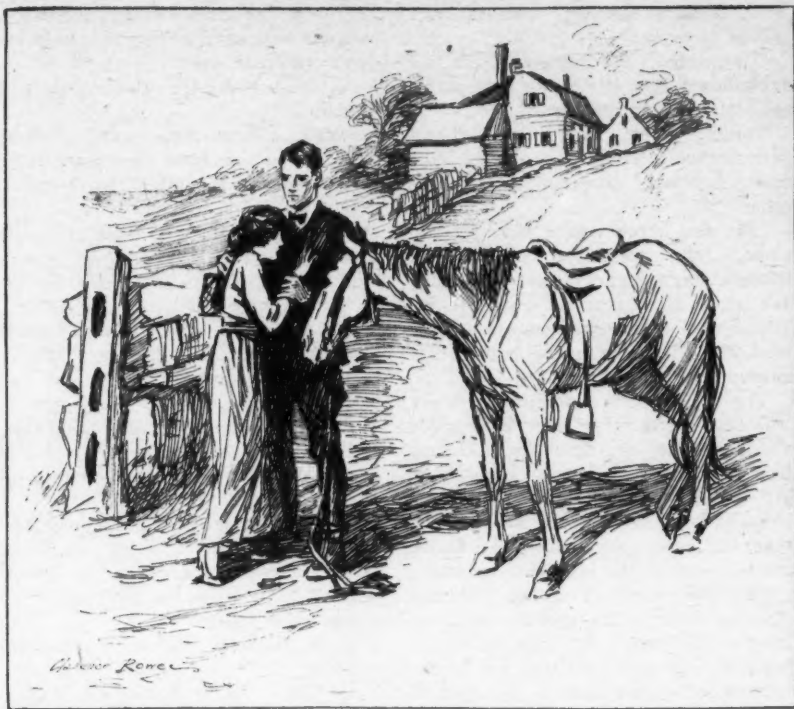
"I hope you improve, Madam Cope," she said calmly, and got herself out of the room.

"She thinks I stole it!" she cried, in her extremity of anger. "Does *he* think so, too?"

She walked at a great pace to the village, accomplished her errands, and started home. At the post office, the postmaster peered over his owl-like spectacles to remark:

"Ain't it queer works up to Doctor Cope's?—him losin' three hundred dollars right from under his nose, so to say."

"Queer enough," she murmured and fled from him. How long before her name would be stirred into the mystery with the long spoon of village gossip? "Does he believe I stole it?" That beat in the back of her brain behind every thought. She had threatened to; must



The spirit seemed clean gone out of her, her head drooped forward against his arm, she wept great tears, and sobbed piteously.

she now give an account for that idle word?

And suddenly there was Gilbert before her at the beginning of her own lane, walking his tired horse at a foot-pace. She drew up by the stone wall to wait for him, and as she watched him all unaware of her, a breath of cool peace soothed the fever in her blood. Only to look at Gilbert, big, strong, and kind, was to be sure that no petty or mean view of another could find harbor in him.

"Gilbert." She meant to speak out boldly, man to man, but her voice sounded like a grieved child's.

He slid to the ground, throwing the reins over his horse's head, and took

her hand, his eyes questioning her, though he spoke not a word.

"Your grandmother thinks I stole your money."

He gripped her hand hard.

"She's an old lady, an' full o' notions."

"Pretty quick everybody in Pettipaug will think so, too."

The spirit seemed clean gone out of her, her head drooped forward against his arm, she wept great tears, and sobbed piteously.

"No, they won't, either," he told her, stroking her hair as he had the night of her terror, "because I'm goin' to find out before that who did take it."

"How?" Her tear-wet face lifted to

his as if she had faith in any miracle of his performing.

"I don't know yet, but I will."

She trembled and caught at his sleeve with both hands.

"Mat did get hold o' three hundred dollars some way. He won't tell me how."

"Not my three hundred," he assured her. "You listen, Polly, dear child——" His voice caught for an instant, he drew away from her just a step.

The girl swung around. Dosia Gerrish was coming into the lane. With a jump that poured the color into her face, Mary 'Lizabeth started on homeward, merely nodding over her shoulder.

"Good afternoon, Doctor Cope."

She could feel, if she could not see, Dosia fall into talk with him at once, and she held her head high in the air, while within her heart sank in shame. She had forgotten that only night before last she had seen them "courtin'" under the elm tree.

The week that followed called home to the young doctor the saying, "Endurance is the measure of a man." The lawless, passionate girl, Mary 'Lizabeth, stood up to the fire of Pettipaug comment—amused or horrified—with a kind of still patience, neither storming nor grieving herself out, but unflinchingly going about her business. Violet shadows darkened under her eyes, her head was always in the air, but the eyes themselves were crystal clear, and for any kindness her smile flashed out brilliantly.

Gilbert supported her stoutly before their world, swearing at the men to their faces and at the women behind their backs, and doubly cursing his own household that had leaked his secret. His grandmother was hardest of all to endure, so soft and silken, so envenomed against the girl. As he sat beside her one night, listening with his large patience to her interminable tales of

folk long dead and gone, he pondered over the gray ashes of her love, once a leaping flame of blood and fire.

"Gran," he said softly, "I been up to old Mrs. Stow's to-day. It don't seem 'as if Mary 'Lizabeth took after her at all. What was her grandfather like?"

The hand lying weakly in his twitched sharply, yet in a moment the old voice said, with tranquillity:

"He was a splendid type o' man. The family's run out now."

"I think Mary 'Lizabeth's a mighty fine girl," steadily.

"You do!" All the years that could not forget steeled the voice.

Gilbert looked at her intently.

"She hates her!" Then keenly: "An' she hates the idea o' the two families bein' joined at last."

"There's some one in the office, doctor," the Widow Tallett came in to tell him.

Gilbert kissed his grandmother's shining hair.

"I wish you were willin' to sit up some," he told her kindly.

"I will, just as soon as ever I get strength. I ain't young an' lusty any more, Gillie."

The widow followed him into the hall. "She's got a sight more strength than what she's willin' to let on. She always has to be coaxed out o' her sick spells."

"We'll get her up to-morrow," he assured her.

Dosia Gerrish stood in the middle of the office.

"Good evenin', Gilbert." Dosia's voice was trained by speech with a deaf father to a clear fullness. "Don't light any more lamps. I don't want drugs. I got news for you."

Gilbert considered the good, comely woman before him in a kind of daze. Why did she leave his blood cool in his body, and queer-cornered, fierce little Polly send it leaping into his throat?

"My money?" The subject next his heart.

"It's about Mat an'—an' me. He's back from his first trip, an' he wants it should be known now."

The young doctor stared dumbly.

"We're tokened, an' we're goin' to take our weddin' trip in the *Rachel Straight*. Father's given it to us 'stead o' plenishin's for a house."

"That clears up one dark spot," he found himself saying. "Dosia, I congratulate him for all that's in me." He seized both her hands.

"Thank you, Gilbert." Dosia's mild face glowed. "You think I'm takin' a risk, but I trust Mat, because I know him better'n any one else. He an' Polly are queer an' different from other folks to meet, but they've got solid qualities inside."

The young man smiled in the dusk at this shrewd thrust.

"I respect his judgment in women," he told her.

"I wanted to tell you first, myself; you've been so neighborly, an' bein' Mat's guardian."

"Does Mary 'Lizabeth know?"

"Not yet. Mat'll tell her to-morrow. He's gone upcountry to-night."

Dosia talked while she moved slowly through the window.

"I left father all 'lone," she explained.

"Who's goin' to stay with him when you're gone?"

"Walk 'cross with me an' I'll set out my plans complete."

At the boundary fence Gilbert looked back toward his house. He seemed to see a figure on his porch.

"Who's there?" he called.

"Just Mary 'Lizabeth Forest," answered the figure. "You left Gran's medicine on the shelf same as usual? Don't come back. I'll find it." He followed Dosia on through the gap in the fence.

It was a hot night, so still that the

creak of oars in their locks and the whine of a rusty anchor chain sounded plain from the river. Gilbert could not sleep, running back and forth on blind trails after the money. About midnight, he crept downstairs in his bare feet into the garden; a drink, cool from the well, might calm him.

The night was a marvel of starlit loveliness, heavenly sweet with all the summer scents. Down the river the two eyes of the sailors, Calf's Head Light and Hayden's Point Light, watched sleeplessly. He shivered a little in the dew.

"I guess I'll turn in now."

As he passed his office, he glanced in through the window, for he had closed it up hastily, not lighting the lamps to see if all were right. Did something white move in it? He leaped the rail and pressed his face against the pane. The room was empty. He found a pane he had broken that morning, got his fingers through to the window catch, and so let himself in and lighted a lamp. The room was austere and peaceful. He shrugged his shoulders, baffled in some subtle sense below reason, and went on to bed.

As soon as he was up the next morning, Gilbert went down into his office.

"What fool notions a man can get!" he scoffed, as he yet began to search about the room.

It was with no strong amazement that he saw a roll of bills lying on his desk, and it was with his fingers rather than his brain that he counted it over. Just as old Brown had given it to him—ten twenties, nine tens, and ten ones—no, only nine ones now; the three hundred lacked one dollar.

"Folks might say Polly got this back last night when she came in alone," he remarked to himself. "I don't."

He searched through every part of the room.

"Nothin' changed!" Then suddenly: "Hello!"

The back wall of the room had a fireplace in its center, on each side of which hung a curtain of woolen stuff. He remembered that his grandmother had explained to him something about two doors behind these curtains, no longer used. One of these curtains was kinked up a little from the floor. He examined it and found the curtain edge caught in the crack of the door. Instantly he was out in the hall to see where that door opened. He faced the hall entrance to his grandmother's bedroom. The door must lead from the office, through some closet or passage, into her room. He lifted the curtain, and found the door locked, the knob taken off, and the sharp-edged shank sticking out. To this shank clung a bit of white lace edging. Allowing himself no thoughts, he went in to see his grandmother.

While he listened to her account of her night, his eyes traveled over the room. There was the fireplace corresponding to the one in the office; and the door beside it—that must be a closet. Then he studied the position of the nurse's cot at the end of the long room. He knew the widow was both slightly deaf and a heavy sleeper. But did righteous old ladies, members of churches, ever plot and cheat? Could so sick a woman, even if she would?

The widow set the breakfast tray on the stand by the bed.

"Careful, 'Melie. I don't think it's steady," warned Madam Cope.

"Lor', it's safe 'nough!" thudding off to the door.

The tray careened over, Gilbert and the widow both sprang forward, but madam herself caught it in her hands—silver tray, teapot, sugar bowl, and dishes—and held it rigid.

"That took strength," her grandson thought, as he lifted the tray from her steady hands. His surgeon's eyes noted that the lace at her right hand

was torn in a triangular nick. If he could get one look into that closet!

"I deem you need a shawl. It's a kind o' green mornin', for all the night was so hot. Where I put that little lavender one?" The widow was fumbling over chair backs.

Gilbert clutched this Heaven-sent chance.

"I'll get Gran a cape or somethin'." Headfirst he plunged into the closet.

It was a long section, hung with a few garments, evidently of price. Opposite the door into the bedroom was another, on which the morning sun from the bedroom windows struck a clear shaft of light. At the foot of the door lay a crumpled piece of paper.

He snatched up the paper and pulled down some sort of garment with one sweep of his arms.

"Here you are, Gran."

"My best head cape!" Madam Cope laughed with the pleasure all Gilbert's jokes gave her. She looked up at him with real love softening the icy blue of her eyes. Of all the wealth of kinship with which her life in youth had been endowed, only this one grandson was left to her.

"Son," she murmured tenderly, "you're all I have now. You won't ever do anythin' to hurt me?" Her mind dwelt upon Mary 'Lizabeth Forrest and possible connection with her.

"Never, dear," kissing her, his mind only upon his discovery.

He stood in the early sunshine regarding the dollar bill in his hand.

"It's a mighty deal to ask of any girl, but I don't believe *she'll* think so."

Mary 'Lizabeth was spreading out clothes upon the grass, her skirts high kilted, her sleeves rolled up to the shoulders. She had an air of irritated haste, damaging to sentiment. The hour and the place, too, were scarcely romantic—nine o'clock on a summer morning in Mrs. Zelinda Stow's kitchen garden!

Gilbert walked straight to her and grasped both her soap-sudsy hands.

"The money's found, Polly."

"Oh, Gilbert!" Her voice broke on his name, her eyes brimmed tears.

He told her briefly his discovery.

"She put it back last night after she heard me alone in the office! That sweet-faced ol' lady! How could she? What had she against me?"

He lifted her hands to his breast.

"Against your grandfather an' mother."

"I can't remember either o' 'em."

Gilbert watched her steadily.

"When Pettipaugh knows of this, the shame you've carried will be hers to bear."

"How's it goin' to know unless it's told?"

"But they must know it's found——"

"Tell 'em you mixed it up with some papers, tell 'em it fell through a crack in your safe, tell 'em any yarn that they'll believe. But if you tell 'em your poor, ol', sick grandmother took it out o' spite, I'll—I'll—kill you!"

Gilbert laughed out in pure delight. "I bet you will!"

"I hope the *Rachel Straight* is content. She's made trouble enough for one boat."

"I reckon we've both sacrificed enough to her. She's purified for Mat's weddin' cruise."

"Oh! Did Mat tell you?"

"Dosia did."

Mary 'Lizabeth's small, eager face set rigidly, her eyes dulled. She pulled at his hands to free herself.

"Dosia is an excellent, good girl," she said.

"She is that. She'll make a noble wife."

"Yes, she will," dully. "I got to finish my washin'. Let go my hands. What you mean, holdin' 'em?"

It was Gilbert's turn to lose the light in his face.

"What is it, Polly? What's wrong?"

"Nothin'. I got to work. I can't waste time here."

"Don't it please you to have Mat wed Dosia?"

"Dosia! Mat! Was it they under the elm——"

She burst into wild laughter and hid her face on the edge of the rain barrel.

Gilbert bent over her, for the sounds he heard were like sobs. He took her into his arms and held her close.

"Oh, Gilbert," she cried, her voice smothered against his breast, "I've been awful to you, an' I've thought awful hard things o' you, all 'long o' that *Rachel Straight*!"

"An'—I—Gran an' I—have done awful things to you. Look up, little dearie. Let's charge it all down to the *Rachel Straight*, close the account, an' begin again. An', say, Polly, darlin', let's get in our weddin' trip before the *Rachel Straight* does hers."



Dead

SHE is dead, but the rose lives yet.

She is dead, but the birds still sing.

If only I could forget

That to-day is spring!

She is dead, and the thrush trills so—

Has he learned but just one tune?

If only I did not know

That to-day is June!

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



Substitutes for Poverty

By Hildegard Lavender

Author of "War-Time Views," "Doing Good," etc.

ILLUSTRATION BY H. VON S. JONES

THE doctor had listened to her friends of the tea-table circle express a bewildering variety of views on a thousand subjects, but she had expressed none, save a preference for cake over toast, and for strong tea over weak. She regarded them a trifle sardonically as they talked of the Progressive Party and child-labor laws, of cheap cuts of meats and of the Camp Fire Girls, of H. G. Wells as a prophet, and Doctor Lyman Abbott as a leader of thought.

"You're scorning us very mightily to-day," observed the pourer of tea, at a pause in the ripple of conversation.

"Why is it? Are we worse than usual, or are you merely more tired? Or is it your patients and not your friends who fill you with that superb scorn you are showing on your intellectual countenance?"

"It's all of us," replied the doctor, taking up the challenge promptly. "Myself as well as you, you as well as the silly patients, the patients as well—"

"It's society she's after again!" interrupted the bride. "I knew it! I felt it when she came in—she always feels that way when she wears that suit. It's an immoral suit—and reasonably ugly. It always makes her cross, and when

our dear doctor is disgruntled, she thinks of a few more sins she can lay on poor old society's shoulders."

"Just because you're married, my dear," retorted the doctor, in a more cheerful voice, "don't let the idea that you're grown up get hold of you. Don't begin to think of yourself as mature, and able to give and take with the ancients." She tweaked the bride's pink ear, temptingly within range, and the others laughed at the bride as, a moment before, they had been ready to laugh at the doctor.

"But what have we all done, we and the patients and the rest of the world, to cause this gloomy brow?" demanded some one, when the bride had asserted her antiquity of experience and judgment.

The doctor looked thoughtful.

"What have we done?" she repeated. "Well, to a degree we've abolished poverty. What are we doing? We're running around like headless hens trying to find a substitute for it."

A chorus of protest greeted her. "I assure you we haven't banished poverty in my family," chanted three women as one. "Or in mine, or mine!" came the testimony of two more. "You should see my last month's bills, and compute the difference between them and my last month's allowance!" cried this. "Abolished poverty! When I can't possibly afford even a course at the gymnasium to keep my spreading waist within decent bounds!" exclaimed another.

"Dearest doctor, are you, perchance, a little mad?" asked the member of the circle who had reserved her comment until the clamor of the others should have subsided. "Six weeks out of seven you come in from your visits in the tenements full of a fine rage over the fact of poverty and distress, which you generally claim to be due to the racial stupidity that refuses your cure—all for the condition—single tax or socialism

or syndicalism or whatever you happen to want to impose on the world at the moment! And now to-day! Are you, by any sad accident, a trifle insane?"

The doctor smiled a little grimly.

"Of course you have me, in one sense," she admitted. "But you are about as logical as you would be if you found fault with me for administering the usual remedies in a typhoid case because you had heard me declare that there need be no typhoid if the community were educated. You're about as logical as you would be to laugh me to scorn because I put the fat lady, here, on a starchless, sugarless diet, while I told the poor little tubercular girl on Allen Street to eat all the cream and milk and eggs she could stuff—or afford! When I said that 'we' had abolished poverty, and that since then 'we' were devoting a great deal of effort to finding substitutes for it, I meant ourselves, and comfortably well-to-do people like us."

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind elucidating or illustrating or doing something to let the light in upon our beclouded brains," suggested some one.

"I'd be charmed to try," replied the doctor politely. "It's like this: We, with the help of modern inventions, have done away, even for the rather impecunious, with many of the necessities of poverty, all of which involved labor; and we're going about ever since trying to invent labors to take the place of those we have lost. And the invented labors, which do not bear any real relation to life, are very largely failures. Do you see what I mean?"

"No," said the fat lady promptly, looking with ardent desire at the bonbon dish of marrons glacés. "I don't, for one."

"Neither do I," the bride was emboldened to say.

The rest said nothing, but looked hopefully at the doctor.

"Well," that young woman declared

with vigor, "I'll bring it home to your intelligences by direct illustration. Look at our dear sister here, the fat lady——"

"You might have begun on some one else," complained the fat lady, yielding to the marrons.

"Look at the fat lady," repeated the doctor peremptorily. Every one looked at the smiling, plump, fair, easy dame, who munched her forbidden fruit with enjoyment. "She mourns that she hasn't money enough to go to a gymnasium this winter. Why does she need to go to a gymnasium?"

"Because," guessed the fat lady, "her husband is so wealthy that he can afford to give her three or four meals a day, and she is therefore enabled to put on flesh? Did I guess right, doctor? And if he were too poor to afford me more than one meal a day, I shouldn't put on weight, and so——"

"Don't be silly!" the doctor interrupted her. "No, the reason that she needs to go to a gymnasium is—apart from the fact that she cannot keep her fingers out of the bonbon dish—because her comfortable income enables her to have a cook and two maids, a chauffeur-gardener, a vacuum cleaner, and an electric washer, to do the work that once upon a time, before modern invention had abolished so much poverty, she would have been obliged to do herself—to the benefit of her figure!"

"The laundress," stated the fat lady, in the serene tone of one conveying a bit of scientific information, "has a waist as ample as my own."

But the doctor, in the heat of her theorizing, declined to hear this item.

"A generation or two ago, before so many of the hardships of poverty had been abolished even for the moderately poor, what would our fat lady have been doing each day? She would have been making up the kitchen fire in the morning—no gas stoves, no electric

kitchen outfits for her then! She would have made the kitchen fire——"

"Not if she knows herself, she wouldn't!" declared the fat lady, with conviction. "Not while she had an able-bodied husband or an able-bodied son——"

"My dear, at the period of which I speak, able-bodied husband and son would have been busy milking the cow, feeding the horse, cutting the grass, before they went down to the store or the office for their day's work, or off to school. They would have done very well by you had they supplied you with plenty of kindling! You would, I insist upon it, have made the kitchen fire, cooked the breakfast—a good, substantial breakfast, too, for working people require something more than a piece of grapefruit and a slice of dry toast! You would have seen to it that the children were clean and dressed for school, and that their little lunch boxes were full of doughnuts and biscuits——"

"Poor little innocent stomachs!" The fat lady grieved for the hypothetical consumers of those luncheons.

"Not at all," corrected the doctor, still firm. "Those children would have had a half mile to walk to school; they would already have had exercise at home with their little chores; they would be obliged to help keep the schoolroom wood box full, and the schoolroom water pail, also. They would have plenty of exercise and plenty of ozone to help them take care of the soda biscuits and the doughnuts and the slab of cold pork——"

"Ugh!" breathed the circle.

"They wouldn't have to have pre-digested food and orange juice, those children!" The doctor contemplated the offspring of her fancy with pride. "They wouldn't have been the victims of the abolition of poverty, you see. But to return to the fat lady. After she had gotten her brood fed and off, what would her day have been?"

"What did Sherman call war?" murmured the fat lady dreamily, as the doctor paused for breath.

The circle shouted, but the orator of the day was, too well a-stream to be halted by mere laughter.

"Her day would have been full of wholesome work, and, more important still, full of vital interests! Everything that she did, everything that she thought, would be directly, intimately, splendidly connected with the problem of her own life and that of those dear to her. She would have swept, baked, cooked, sewed, made beds, scrubbed, fed chickens——"

"Good heavens!" sighed the fat lady. "Why, why did I let you take me as your awful illustration? Why did I let you wish such hideous days upon me?"

"Do you suppose," went on the doctor, "that she would have been obliged to go to a gymnasium to keep her figure?"

"No, merely to a sanitarium to save her life!" interpolated the fat lady.

"Nonsense! You would have been three times as healthy, physically and mentally!"

"I should like to know what is the matter with my mind!" The fat lady pretended to bridle angrily, but no one ever believes in the anger of a fat lady, and the doctor sped on, without giving the interruption the tribute of a reply:

"It's as I tell you. We've abolished poverty, we comfortably off, middle-class persons, and we frantically try to find substitutes for the healthy work and the healthy interests with which it used to fill our days. I've just come from a case," she went on. "None of you know the woman. She's rich—not rich enough to endow research laboratories, or even to enter yachts in the international races, but rich, you know. She never has to consider whether her husband's coats will cut down for Willie, or whether her lavender is worth dyeing. If one of the children is sick,

she doesn't have to think whether she had better nurse him herself, or have a trained nurse in; she has the trained nurse—two of her. If she wants to give a donation to her college, she does not have to exercise her ingenuity in deciding where she will save it out of the housekeeping and the dress allowances. In short, the daily events of her life are of no interest—no vital, passionate interest—to her. Well, what has happened?"

"She has probably used her leisure and her freedom of mind to study something she was crazy to learn," said the intellectual member of the group.

"No, she isn't an intellectual woman. She has supplied herself with a passionate interest. Everybody has to, you know! Well, she has done it——"

"Dancing," suggested some one.

"No," said the doctor shortly. "A flirtation. Poor imbecile, she chose the object of her interest badly! And now—— Oh, it's loathsome, but he's applying a sort of blackmail to her, and she has succumbed under it, and is laid up with what I am calling nervous exhaustion. She had to tell me what the matter was, you see. Now, if that woman, who really has a sweet disposition and a good heart—it was her pity for the creature with whom she is involved that started the whole thing!—had been obliged to consider the needs of her family, obliged to work for their happiness and comfort, do you suppose such a thing could ever have come about? Certainly not! The sanitariums and the divorce courts are full of women who are merely the victims of modern inventions—the victims of the abolition of poverty—of the consequent leisure and lack of vital interest in their lives!"

She paused for breath.

"And I'll tell you another place that is full of the victims," she went on. "The summer camps for boys and girls. Before modern invention had done

away with the economic usefulness of boys and girls in the family, did any one ever hear of a special system for coördinating the faculties of the child? I guess not! His faculties were co-ordinated, all right, in ways that no one ever talked about. He learned the use of his hands pulling the weeds out of the crevices of the brick walk, she of hers helping mother shell peas. The woodpile and the patchwork quilt have done more than Froebel and Maria Montessori put together for the development of childhood. I'm willing to stake my reputation on it!

"Nowadays, in every well-to-do household of my acquaintance, there is a large-sized boy or girl problem. What are we going to do with our children to teach them the coördination of mind and muscle? the parents wail. What are we going to do with them to teach them habits of order and efficiency? I'll wager that when a girl had to keep her own bedroom tidy, and a few others besides, she didn't have to take special courses in orderly arrangement. She had to work too hard if she herself or if other people were disorderly. Inefficiency limited her leisure for fun—for picnicking, for playing. Dawdling over his vegetable patch shortened her brother's precious hours at the swimming pool.

"Nowadays there is a whole science of child culture which has grown up out of nothing but the abolition of poverty. Poverty makes a child a working member of a family, an integral part of a household— No, I'm not advocating the poverty that drives children to the mills, as you very well know, bride! But in the modern, well-to-do home, with all forms of helpful, wholesome drudgery banished, the child is no more than he is when he goes to stay at a hotel. He's a boarder. He has no function that serves a purpose in the economy of things, and at the same time develops his practical sense, his knowl-

edge of how to handle himself. It's the abolition of poverty, even from middle-class households, that has created the new child problem, and has built up all manner of fancy systems of education!

"Every summer camp that you see represents an effort on the part of parents to delegate to some one else the task of fitting their children for practical life—for teaching them the use of their eyes and their hands and their legs—things that the fortunate children of old times used to learn naturally in the course of their chores, and of the sports to which they escaped gladly when their chores were done. Imagine a boy of forty years ago, who lived within five miles of a stream or a pool, needing instruction in the art of swimming or fishing! Imagine him taking a course in bird lore! Oh, my!"

"Then you don't believe in summer camps?" anxiously asked the matron who had disposed of her sons the summer before as the doctor outlined.

"Don't believe in them!" snapped that lady. "Of course I do! Since modern society has been silly enough to throw away the great education of the mind, body, and heart which the old-fashioned home, with its necessities—the necessities of decent poverty—conducted, why, of course I believe in all the substitutes you can invent! You've got to have them if you aren't going to have the race degenerating into a pulp, intellectually! But—isn't it grotesque? Isn't it pitiful?"

"Here's your car, doctor," said the bride politely. "Or would you like to have me send it away, so that you can get a good, healthy walk home?"

"No, for I'm a victim, too," replied the doctor. "But some day, you know, it will be all right, when we've struck an equalization system. You know, a good many dreamers think that is going to make all men rich! Well, it isn't! It's going to do a better thing. It's going to make all men decently poor!"



THE TONTINE and the "EXTRA FULL"

by Marie Manning

Author of "The Destiny of Ingersollia," "The Survivor," "A Chronicle of the Only Child," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

THE feeling of spring was unmistakable, even on Sixth Avenue, but flowers, green, growing things, songbirds, and other joyous properties of the season were to be found only on the hats of the women. The soaring skyscrapers, the gray pavements swarming with the human ant hive, the swinging shuttle of the elevated, all seemed to be partners in a conspiracy for the suppression of spring, her bloom, her sorceries. Yet the feeling was there; you caught it in the languid gait of the dilatory shop-girl, in the bars of sunlight on the flagged gray pavement, in the restless glance from ant to ant of the swarming human hive, as they crawled along and hid themselves in the glant mounds about Herald Square.

And looking long enough, one actually found flowers, real flowers—as much as a market basket of them—not far from the dusty triangle inclosing the bronze gentleman who makes a business of looking disapprovingly toward Thirty-third Street. True, these flowers were wired and fastened to stakes and made to hold up their heads and bloom bravely—these second-day roses, which had not sold at the florist's—but they nevertheless proclaimed to Herald Square that winter was over.

And it was spring, too, in the heart of Mr. James Smeaton, senior aisle man of the great department store of Argyle & Constantine, as he made his

way across car tracks and under the noses of automobiles, in quest of a bunch of those second-day roses, to give to his "ladylove"; that was the phrase he used in thinking of Margaret Darrell, for Mr. Smeaton had been born in Scotland, and a romantic, old-fashioned phrase was to him like the glimpse of a bit of tartan in a shop window.

But for the early morning hour, you might have taken the senior aisle man for a successful banker or for the president of a corporation that valued "appearance" on the part of its officers. His frock coat was unimpeachable; so were his waistcoat and tasteful tie. Shining and faultless was his top hat; his pearl-gray trousers were fresh from the rite of pressing. If Smeaton were not a banker, your second guess might have been usher at a wedding, a widower's or widow's wedding, where the guests were, perhaps, not so conspicuous for youth as for their securities.

The senior aisle man's make-up was a little pronounced even for Argyle & Constantine's, but the great shop had magnificent traditions back of it; like the early church, it stood as a rock in the restless sea of movement to new neighborhoods and change to new methods. A list of its patrons with charge accounts read like a roster of those early settlers who bought Manhattan Island from the Indians for twenty-eight dollars. To shop at Argyle-Constantine's was like having a



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burial plot in old Trinity or a country place on Long Island.

James Smeaton knew that aisle men all over New York were pointing the way to beauty and fashion, under archway and so many aisles over, in sack coats and soft neckties, but he despised them as creatures who dragged down their own dignity and trampled on it. Woman's suffrage and mental healing drove him to frenzy. He was a dyed-

in-the-wool conservative, to whom life had been no joy ride. But it had its moments, and one of them was when he made his way toward the dusty triangle to buy the wired, second-day roses for Margaret Darrell.

She was a saleswoman in Argyle & Constantine's cloak-and-suit department. Looking at her perfectly authentic brown hair, her clear pink-and-white English skin, her blue eyes, one found

it difficult to reconcile with these genuine assets of pulchritude the fact that she had been employed in Argyle-Constantine's for twenty-two years.

Perhaps it was Margaret's English birth that had first attracted Smeaton's attention; he had long since made up his mind that American girls were extravagant and did not make thrifty wives, and thrift was the passion of his life. It was thrift that had made him take out a tontine life-insurance policy when he was twenty-five years of age. The policy was for five thousand dollars, and it would fall due the April after James had celebrated his forty-fifth birthday.

Not a soul knew of the tontine, or suspected it—not even Margaret Darrell. To have shared his secret with any one would have robbed it of a certain illicit charm. He was far too respectable to harbor any mysteries in his life, but the hidden worship of his tontine made James something of a blade in his own estimation. Another reason for guarding his darling policy so jealously was the haunting dread that one of those flashing, wonderfully dressed American girls would marry him in spite of himself for his prospects, and while James despised all women as possible political factors, he was horribly afraid of them when they were attending strictly to their own feminine business of charm.

If the little English girl stuck to him till his tontine fell due, he would ask her to be his wife, but he would hold out no bribes to her; like the counterfeit Lady Claire, Mr. Smeaton wished to be loved for his "own true worth."

The romance had begun when James was twenty-six and Margaret eighteen. He had lingered one morning, at the employees' entrance, for a word with her.

"A rainy day, miss."

And she had agreed, with a blush, that it was.

"Christmas seems to promise a little seasonable weather, Miss Margaret." And when she agreed as usual, he had followed it up with: "If it's not too bad of a Saturday, perhaps you'll have a bit of dinner with me?"

And this time Margaret had agreed in a tentative manner that had delighted him: "I will try to get my mother's permission, Mr. Smeaton."

And so, on the Saturday of Christmas week, they had dined at a Sixth Avenue chophouse on sirloin steak, baked potatoes, apple pie, cheese, and coffee. The same restaurant was to welcome them a great many Saturdays for long years.

Mr. Smeaton of the silks hadn't said anything at dinner; but, as her mother had pointed out, no man of Scotch birth would take a girl to an expensive dinner like that unless he "meant something." Two or three weeks had gone by, during which the silk salesman had committed himself to nothing more personal than weather speculation. Then he had asked her to dinner again. Her mother had walked the floor till her return; still her daughter had had nothing to confide.

Margaret's features were that subtly provocative combination of regularity and irregularity that Du Maurier loved to draw; she had the splendid English coloring and shining hair that is the heritage of women born in moist climates. These qualifications had not been lost on Mrs. Masterson, head of the cloak-and-suit department, and she had pointed out to the firm that a girl like that was wasted on the notions.

"I could sell ten thousand dollars' worth of goods a year on her figure alone. Anything you'd put on her would look Rue de la Paix."

So, at twenty-two, Margaret had been taken from the notions, given a raise of salary, and put to trying on cloaks and suits. And still James had not spoken. Mrs. Darrell would have flown

to her parental privilege of asking questions, but she knew her old neighbors north of Tweed, and it was not in nature—Scottish nature—to invite a girl to such dinners if the extravagance were not to be reckoned with later. So Mrs. Darrell had folded her work-gnarled hands one day and died, with the satisfactory feeling that her daughter's fate was "settled."

By this time Margaret had been so deeply in love with her taciturn suitor, now an aisle man, that, Mr. Bernard Shaw's theories to the contrary, she had had no methods to induce what the Irish call "the hard word."

James had found his tontine a jealous mistress, but he had never wavered in his allegiance. As he had put it to himself: "There's no more in one of these shop-salary marriages to keep a house warm than there is in burning old paper."

And then, after twenty years, came the fateful day when the tontine, like a golden boomerang, came back to the senior aisle man in the form of a check for five thousand dollars. The termagant tontine that had had to be fed out of every pay envelope, and could never be put off or cajoled or wheedled into foregoing her rights, had at last made up for all the sacrifices.

And so, on that particular Saturday, with its feeling of spring in the air, James stopped for a quarter bunch of the wired roses to give to his ladylove with the news that he had something very particular to say to her that evening at dinner. James did not believe in keeping people in suspense any longer than was necessary.

Spite the tontine and the roses, he had a guilty feeling about Margaret, whom he had rather neglected during the week. It had been a fateful period for James. He had got word about the policy on Wednesday, when the insurance company had requested him to sign certain receipts. This he had man-

aged during the noon hour. Next day there had been the check to deposit, and as he had been about to set forth on this godlike errand, he had got a rather peremptory request from Margaret for a few minutes' talk—a thing she had never asked before. James had excused himself rather brusquely, on the plea of urgent business. Of course, he might have told her what the business was, but he had waited twenty years and he saw no reason for rushing his declaration now.

Climaxes were all too rare in the life of Mr. Smeaton, and he meant to make the most of this tremendous one. He would tell her next Saturday over the steak, baked potatoes, and the rest of it—the menu never varied—that he had five thousand dollars, and would she prefer a house in Flatbush or the Jersey suburbs? All the grim jocularity of his Scotch forbears, which had grown grimmer during the long years of exile, rose to the immensity of the joke. He could keep from Wednesday till Saturday the news that they had five thousand dollars and that she was to quit Argyle & Constantine's and be married immediately.

It was rather early in the "cloaks and suits" when Mr. Smeaton arrived; they were just taking the blue-checked covers off the models. Margaret was not among the black-clad groups that had gathered for a word of gossip before the business of the day should begin. He knew several of the saleswomen, and bowed to them. He thought they returned his salutation with more reserve than usual, though James was not sensitively suspicious by nature. One horrid little errand girl fairly gaped at him, as if he might have been some sort of monster. Two women stopped talking and stared. Whatever may be the human equivalent of the insect's warning antennæ, that faculty now prompted him that the atmosphere of the "cloaks and suits" was



"I don't expect to see Miss Darrell for a couple of months, but when I do, I'll tell her you inquired. She'll be flattered."

distinctly inimical. They seemed to regard him with a sort of dumb hostility, as one whose presence there was an affront to their order, their sex, their right to the pursuit of happiness. They looked their opinion, too, as at one whose offense is beyond the grasp of the law. He strode over to one of the saleswomen and inquired for Miss Darrell.

She did not answer immediately; such solidarity as her sex boasted was in her mocking stare. Here was a man who had "wasted a girl's time," years and years of it, and yet, when she had had trouble with the management, wouldn't give her a minute's time or a word of advice. There were witnesses who had heard him say, and none too gently, that he had important private business to attend to during that lunch hour.

"I don't expect to see Miss Darrell for a couple of months, but when I do, I'll tell her you inquired. She'll be flattered."

"What do you mean by that?" James was bereft of the art of badinage.

"Lessee, this is Sattiday. She left the city of a Wednesday—— Say, Mr. Smeaton, this kind inquiry is pretty fast and furious for you, ain't it?" It is hardly necessary to say that this young woman did not represent the traditions of Argyle-Constantine's. She had been taken on for the "spring rush."

"Do you mean she's not employed here?"

"Well, I guess you're about the only one of her friends that don't know it."

James felt the blood drain out of his face, and something, his heart maybe, rise in his throat and begin to pound at his collar.

"Gee, Mr. Smeaton, but you do look faded out! Well, maybe you ain't as black as you're painted. My mother sez that's true, even of the devil."

"See here, girl, do you want me to go raving mad in the 'suits and cloaks,' besides be late for me own post as well? What's happened to Maggie Darrell?"

"Well, all her friends seen that tryin' on suits and cloaks was too much for her failin' strength. Besides, she was gettin' too stout to display to advantage any but the largest sizes. Pore Miss Darrell, the more she starved herself, and the harder she hustled, it seemed like the more fat she put on——"

James dragged his watch from his waistcoat pocket; for the first time in his twenty-five years of service with Argyle-Constantine he was late. But he was a man and a lover, and he had some rights, even if they conflicted with his business obligations.

"Get on, girl—get on—and tell me what happened to Maggie Darrell. I know as well as you that she was putting on weight."

"Well, the rest of us seen how she had to pass all the slim modduls up. The old floor manager knew it, and winked at it, 'count of her long years of faithful service. Say, Mr. Smeaton, Miss Maggie must a-worked here before I was born——"

James groaned and looked at the minute hand of his watch.

"Well, when Mr. Polk retired, and the new floor manager they got from Chicago come, it just seemed that Miss Maggie got on his nerves, anythin' she did. You know, Mr. Smeaton, that figures has gone out completely. The women look like hatpins now, and the new manager said she spoiled everythin' she displayed. He was real rude to her. He said—— But seein' you're still her friend, though appearances was dead agin' you——"

"I don't care what he said. Where is she?"

"Well, do you remember Mrs. Magee—Gazelle Y. Magee? She was before my time, but she used to be at the head of the corset department at Meyer's. She's sellin' a corset she's gotter persnull intrust in now—a new make called the Nymph-Slim—and she travels with her own live modduls. She wanted a moddul for her extra-full sizes, and she just snapped Miss Darrell up. They used to board in the same house."

James wiped the sweat off his forehead, and spoke with the calmness of despair: "Still you haven't told me her address."

"How stupid of me not to have told you before! They're showin' the Nymph-Slms at the Paris Arcade, in Washington."

Mr. Smeaton thanked her, and walked quickly to the fireproof staircase, in the rear of the coat-and-suit department. His frame of mind could not have been better illustrated than by the utterly reckless way in which he threw the bunch of Jacqueminots into the dust bin on the landing below. Not often had emotion led James Smeaton to cast away the value of a quarter!

Meantime, Miss Darrell had joined her fortunes to those of "Mrs. Gazelle Y. Magee, modern corset demonstrator," and, as the department stores at which she exhibited usually advertised, "traveling with her own troupe of live models." Gazelle was one of those geniuses—unheralded, unsung, occupying no space in any local hall of fame—with so finely discriminating a nose for human vanity and such ability to seize, commercialize, and then buy gilded securities with the proceeds, as to have become a fixed star of trade. She had sold corsets at eighteen; in time she had become a buyer of them.

The language of corsets was her mother tongue, so that when the hatpin figure came in, and women hungered and thirsted for slenderness as they never had for salvation, she evolved the scheme of demonstrating the Nymph-Slim corsets at department stores, with live models whose figures fell into the general classifications of "slender," "extra slender," "medium," "full," "extra full."

The shame of being an "extra full," in a day when women fought, bled, and died for thinness, fell to Margaret Darrell. But this buffet of fate was a mere love tap compared with the humiliation of her departure from Argyle-Constantine's, after having words with the new manager. When the situation had hung in the balance and she had gone to the first floor for a word of advice from James, he had been hurrying to deposit the check that would make any business considerations for her in the future unnecessary.

"I've no time to talk now, Maggie. There's important private business I must be attending to," he had said. And Maggie had not unnaturally thought that the business had, in all probability, to do with a rival.

She felt that her whole twenty years of friendship—Saturday-night dinners, gifts at Christmas, Sunday afternoon walks in the parks—had not meant anything to him, except that he had "enjoyed the company of a lady friend."

The duties of an extra full were no sinecure. Three times a day, in a state of such exquisite torture that the grip of the Iron Maiden would have seemed like the clasp of friendship in contrast, did Margaret Darrell come out on the platform and demonstrate to the assembled women of generous girth that a woman may wear a twenty-nine-inch corset and yet, owing to the magic of the Nymph-Slim, look positively willowy.

In the verbal arena, Mrs. Magee

could outtalk any one, unless, perhaps, it might be a single-taxer or a curb-stone exhorter hospitably inviting all to be saved. She was voluble, ungrammatical, persuasive, convincing, gesticulant, and—slender to the breaking point. She understood to perfection the staging, dressing, dialogue, drama, and climax of corset selling. Her climax was always the same:

"Now, ladies, don't all rush to the corset department the minute I finish talking. We have in only about twenty extra saleswomen, and they are unable to handle the trade that always follows one of my corset demonstrations."

But the ladies unfailingly took chances; they rushed as if the corset department had been an overcrowded street car.

The arrangements in the particular department store in Washington at which Mrs. Magee proposed to exhibit were on a scale inferior to her expectations. Waving aside all the floor-walking host who sought to pacify her, her knock on the sacred door of the firm was like the knock of fate.

"What's the use o' getting um here with a patrol ding-dong like this: 'Admission to live-moddul corset demonstration, by card to ladies only,' if, when they get here, you offer um no more privacy than a chicken coop'd give? What've you got? Two or three wabbly screens cutting off the crowd, between hats and jingery! That won't do at all, Mr. Smalley! My modduls are ladies! Perfect ladies, perfect ladies! And they would refuse to demonstrate if there was the least chance of their being observed by the mixed trade."

"Mixed trade?"

"Ladies and gentlemen are mixed trade, ain't they? And not only my modduls, Mr. Smalley, but the audience, insists on privacy, too. They like to ask questions. Heaven's sake! Don't you see this is a tell-your-troubles-to-a-woman matinée?"



"Our medium full," proclaimed Gazelle, "has the perfect thirty-six figure. She conforms to those measure-

The junior partner saw, or at least Gazelle made him think he saw, which was the same thing, and he began to push buttons, use the telephone, give orders. And the auditorium that presently sprang into being was tight as a pea pod.

At two o'clock, the hour fixed for the afternoon demonstration, there were assembled about two hundred and

fifty women, mostly of, or bordering on, "the dangerous age." They stared unblinkingly from their camp chairs at the green portières, from which the live models were due to emerge at any moment. The tension was perceptible. It was a fat woman in a blue hat who usurped the place of that perpetual pin, always about to be, but never quite, dropped as a silence test.



ments that the cloak-and-suit trade has long since decided upon as constituting the human form divine."

"She said in the advertisement in this morning's paper that she could make any one look slim in a pair o' her corsets."

The friend snorted skeptically.

"They all say that. If you've got fat—it's gotter go somewheres. Fat 'n' murder'll out."

Then the expected happened. The green curtains parted, and Gazelle Ma-

gee, "Sorceress of Slenderness," as she called herself, stepped on the platform. She was dressed in black velvet, and her figure presented that scant and impartial disposal of fat peculiar to the eel; an eel rampant, in heraldic phrase—eyes, hands, eyebrows, muscles, in a state of perpetual motion, to illustrate "the corset that gives with every move."

"Ladies," she began, with her full-

stop smile, "it's your first duty in life to be perfectly beautiful—to possess loveliness, no matter what your age may be!" Matrons with married daughters and sons at college strained forward, like hounds on a leash, and swallowed hard, as they ate alive the words of the speaker. "This may be accomplished, regardless of your present or past appearance. You may all be perfectly beautiful if you follow my advice!"

Several women in the audience surged forward, as if to rob her of her secret, but Gazelle waved them back with: "I'll gladly tell you all about it. Only two things are necessary—patience and intelligence." The audience settled in its chairs, with a tight grip, resolved to acquire both virtues at any cost.

"Ladies, this is the age of scientific beauty! Synthetic beauty! The three great achievements of modern science are the manufacture of rubies, diamonds, and beautiful women. Some may think the digging of the Panama Canal a great achievement; others may point to the flying machine; but what are these, I ask you, in comparison to making a grandmother look like a débutante?"

The attitude of the audience plainly expressed: "What indeed?"

"Ladies, you should inspire your clothes with a spirit of conquest, and have the power that comes with perfect beauty. It takes time, ladies; it takes intelligence; it takes corsets—and not every corset will give you that subtle charm, that poise, that chick, that resilience of youth, no matter what your age may be. But the Nymph-Slim Corset is guaranteed to confer these attributes.

"The Nymph-Slim is constructed on wholly original lines. Doubtless you have heard that claim made for other corsets, but they do not produce our effect." Paroxysms of undulation illustrated Mrs. Magee's point. "The Nymph-Slim, ladies, as you see, gives

perfect hip and thigh control; it distributes the abdomen; and it wholly eliminates that bulging overflow of shoulder that so often suggests the figure reversed.

"Are you coming, or going?" I have been often tempted to say to ladies that come to me in the old-fashioned, high-busted corsets: 'Are you looking forward or backward?' And with corset crimes like that on every side, we ask ourselves why happy homes are broken up?" Here the voice of Gazelle grew sepulchral. "And I tell you, ladies, it's because you buy the wrong modduls in corsets!

"My sisters, we may not all be able to look like the Venus of Milo—and most of us wouldn't, if we had the chance—but it's in the power of every intelligent woman to look like a Poiret fashion plate. The Venus of Milo is lacking in style; she has not what the French call 'chick.' But the Poiret moddul has chick, style, distinction, fascination, and that indefinable something that the trade calls 'the eternal feminine.' How does the Poiret figure differ from the old-fashioned figure, such as women suffered in silence from the beginning of time till now? Poiret has improved it, added to its shape and flavor. Poiret might well be called the Luther Burbank of the human form. But I will not detain you longer. My modduls will illustrate my points. Will our medium full please step forward! Medium Full! Ladies, this is Medium Full."

The girl who came from between the green velvet curtains, in answer to her trade name, was one of those careless bits of human perfection that nature sometimes fashions, then casts into the turbid stream of tenement life, to sink or swim. The cost of the pink satin corset, with lingerie to match, that she wore represented a larger expenditure of cash than Medium Full had ever had, or ever expected to have. The damask

oval of her cheek and chin began to move almost imperceptibly as she champed, with furtive caution, the gum she was forbidden to bring into the arena. She walked like a young goddess on the highroad to Olympus, but when anxious women began to ask her questions about the comfort and ease of Nymph-Slims, she replied in the least Addisonian of the East Side's many dialects.

"Our medium full," proclaimed Gazelle, "has the perfect thirty-six figure. She conforms to those measurements that the cloak-and-suit trade has long since decided upon as constituting the human form divine. What is your height, Medium Full?"

"Five futt ate, in me stockungs," answered the divinity, and the illusion was gone. It was as if the balcony had fallen in the second act of "Romeo and Juliet."

"Will our extra full kindly step forward? Ladies, this is our extra full." And Margaret Darrell, poised and gently dignified, stood before some two hundred and fifty pairs of feminine eyes, "showing" a pair of white satin corsets. You would never have guessed, from her gentle acceptance of the situation, what it cost her, as she walked down the green-carpeted aisle, with head erect, displaying Nymph-Slims, as if that had been the destiny decreed for her by the gods from the beginning. But the heart of her was sick with loathing. She had grasped the first way of making an honest living, after leaving Argyle-Constantine, as she had accepted life, with a grave, unembittered philosophy. Even the ridiculous frothing of silk and lace that she wore, to display to better advantage the much-heralded stays, seemed only sweetly and absurdly feminine. There was not a trace of vaudeville about Miss Darrell's appearance.

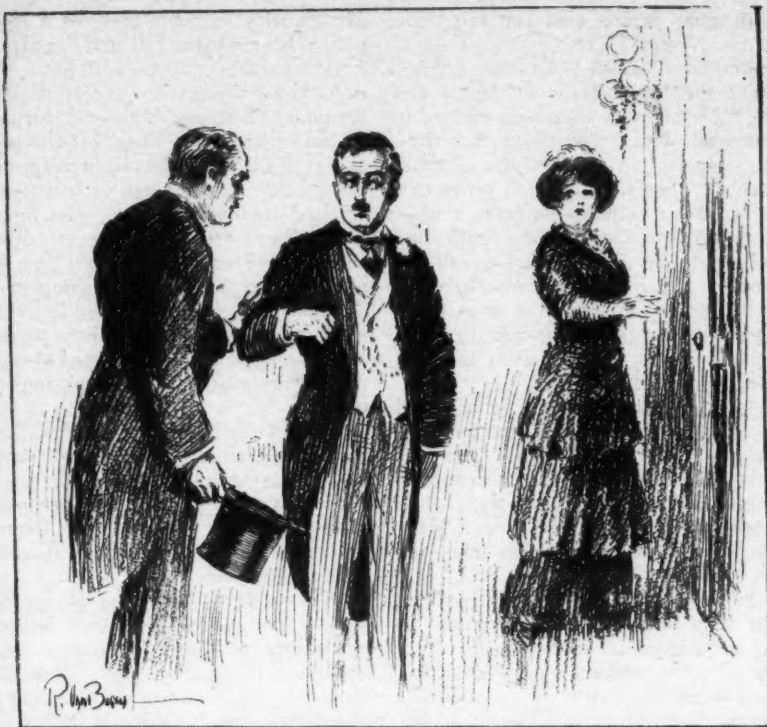
Plainly Extra Full was the model in which the bulk of the audience had its

greatest interest. If the celllike high priestess in black velvet could work any miracles with this too solid flesh, now was the time. There were women in the audience who had not told their weight to their most trusted confidante in years, and who would rather have died than have divulged their obese secret. They had banted, bathed, bowled, golfed, rolled, starved, steamed, and taken up moldy old religions of the Far East that denied the very existence of the fat under which they panted. But they continued, nevertheless, to put it on, invisibly, surely, indisputably, as by the process of the unseen builders of the coral reefs. If this woman, with her new make of corsets, could do anything to make them smaller, let her for Heaven's sake do it quickly—and at any price!

"You see," said Gazelle Magee, "our extra full is plump—there's no getting round it—but she wears her fat—stealthily! No, ladies, it don't rise up and hit you in the eye like a chain of mountains on the horizon. This is due entirely to the inspired cut of our Nymph-Slims. They have practically no intake at the waist. Pounds and pounds and pounds of flesh may be stowed away, unobserved, in our modern big-waisted corset. Extra Full conveys an air of pleasing completion, about which there is not the least suggestion of fat.

"And now, ladies, to show you the perfect ease with which our corsets are adjusted and worn, I will put another pair on Extra Full, to show you the proper method of lacing. And then she will pick up pins from the floor and give other illustrations of their elasticity."

She whipped the white satin vise from Miss Darrell, who felt for the brief moment of release as if she were in heaven, then snapped on another pair and began pulling and hauling on the laces like a sailor making ready for a



Mr. Smeaton swung out a detaining arm. "No, that lady's not Mrs. Magee's extra full—that's my wife. Thought I'd missed her."

storm. She drew and pulled, then tugged some more, till the two halves of the corset nearly met—it was like being caught in a stamping machine.

"Smile! Smile!" commanded Gazelle sotto voce. "Don't look like you were under a trolley. Look like you're having the time of your life!"

Margaret felt sick at the pit of her stomach, the blood pounded to her ears, her heart was doing strange things—but she held up her head and smiled.

"There!" and Gazelle backed away from the triumph of the corsetière's art. "Isn't that a masterpiece? What do you think of the look of that for a thirty-inch corset? Not a hint of

fat anywhere! And the ease of it, the comfort, the looseness!" To illustrate her point, she shoved her hand between the white satin clamp and her smothering victim. "There! You all see how loose that is—like an old shoe."

"Don't drop any pins, please," pleaded her human sacrifice. "I can just manage a handkerchief or something big."

"Now, ladies, the beauty of these corsets is that you can get right down on the floor and romp with the children in them." With great heartiness she scattered a pocket handkerchief, a lace veil, two sachet bags, and an orange on the floor. "Now, Extra Full, show

with what perfect ease you can stoop in the Nymph-Slims."

Margaret stooped for the articles, while the room slowly blackened and the faces of the women were massed in one white blur. The sweat started on her spine as she reached for the last sachet. Then she smiled, to prove that it had been nothing—nothing at all—to stoop for those things. She had delivered her great tidings to all fat women. If you wore Nymph-Slims, such things were possible, even easy! Then she disappeared through the green plush curtains into the dressing room—and fainted!

James Smeaton, though he belonged to the tabooed sex and was perforce excluded from Mrs. Magee's demonstration of Nymph-Slims, was anxiously hovering about the second floor while it was going on. He would meet Maggie the moment it was over and—ask her.

In the meantime he was treating himself to a little mental dissertation on the impatience of women. Here was one of them, whom he had "kept company with" for twenty years, suddenly getting hoity-toity and flying off before a man had a chance to propose to her. And, after all her years with Argyle-Constantine's, identifying herself with an enterprise like this!

"Would you like to be waited on?" the junior partner, who believed in "personally circulating" through the various departments, inquired.

"No, thank you. I'm in the trade myself—Argyle-Constantine's, New York."

"A noble old institution, sir! Have a look around here. You'll find things more modern, but—"

"Now, excuse me, Mr. Smalley, if I seem to butt in, but I'm in the worst kind of a fix. One of my modduls has fainted and won't be able to go on in the late-afternoon demonstration." And Gazelle Magee precipitated herself into the trade amenities of Mr. Smeaton and

Mr. Smalley with the force of a catapult. "It's my extra full, and I'm afraid I won't be able to travel with her. She isn't strong enough for corset demonstrations. But you'd make a fortune on her right here. She's got the perfect type of figure that tip-topptity officials' wives get after they've had to eat officials' dinners for years. Her figure wouldn't be worth a whoop in any other city, but my extra full wears her fat like a duchess! Fat in Washington is a national and patriotic affair; if you're in official life and do your duty, there's no escaping it. It's the outward sign that you're neither stingy nor unpopular."

"Your idea, if I grasp it, Mrs. Magee"—the junior partner was all interest—"is to admit that there is such a thing as the heavy figure, have handsome models for it, and then put them into the hands of some one able to show them to advantage."

"Absolutely! There's no use in trying to squeeze a lot of Federal feeders into hatpin modduls. It stretches your stock and infuriates them! Well, I'll send her to you when she's feeling a little better. She's resting in the Looey Sez. Now I'm out for a bite."

"That woman," said the junior partner, "is more full of ideas than an egg is full of meat."

But Mr. Smeaton had some difficulty in resuming trade amenities. He felt as if he were looking at a merry-go-round, and in place of the cavorting animals were chapters of the wild-geese chase that Margaret Darrell was leading him.

"If I'm not mistaken," Mr. Smalley said, "that's Mrs. Magee's extra full now. She does wear her ombongpong with an air."

It was, indeed, true. Margaret Darrell was coming out of the Looey Sez. Mr. Smeaton assured himself thickly: "I got to beat him to her!" But for the life of him, he did not know how

it was going to be done. Then his mental grappling hooks took a wild whirl through his subconscious mind and pulled up a trick so adverse to those principles of decorum for which he had always stood that it seemed to him almost as if he were living in Paris, which he regarded as above all others the city of intrigue.

As the junior partner started to intercept Miss Darrell on her way to the elevator, Mr. Smeaton swung out a detaining arm.

"No, that lady's not Mrs. Magee's extra full—that's my wife. Thought I'd missed her."

The junior partner excused himself.

As he escorted the astonished Miss Darrell to the elevator, James Smeaton had a reckless consciousness of having implicated in his daring falsehood a devilishly distinguished-looking woman. The touch of pallor left from the fainting attack was immensely becoming.

"Margaret Darrell," he began his long-deferred declaration, "you are a compromised woman—you that have always held your head so high and had no patience with human frailty as shown in Argyle & Constantine's, the daily papers, and the moving pictures."

She thought he was referring to her brief career as a demonstrator of the extra full, and she flinched away from him. What right had he to protest, when he had never suggested any other alternative?

"James Smeaton, you've got no call to pass remarks on my way of earning a respectable living!" She fairly boiled with the outrage of it.

"Now, Maggie, don't get hoity-toity. 'Tisn't the corsets that's compromised you."

"And what has, then?"

"I have, Maggie Darrell," he brought out with an almost unholy relish. "And you'd better be losing no time primping or straightening your hat, but come to

the clergyman, who'll make an honest woman of you."

"There's no clergyman can make of me what I am already, James Smeaton."

Then James told Maggie the story of her great rival, the tontine policy; how he had secretly kept it, cherished it in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, had clung only to the tontine; and how, after twenty years of abject loyalty and devotion and scrimping, the Frankenstein had given up the ghost—the ghost of jealous exaction—and he was a free man, free to marry Maggie and be happy ever after.

"And what's compromising this?"

"Woman, give me time. You and that Gazelle Magee have me fair crazy between you, with the way you leap and bound from job to job and on with this and off with that—and me asking for three days off in the height of the spring season to run after you—me that's never asked a day but what I've been entitled to in my twenty-five years with Argyle-Constantine!"

"James Smeaton, if you've any human mercy about you, tell me what you've done."


But James had his code, and, before proceeding farther, he felt in duty bound to tell her the value her adipose tissue had in the capital of the nation, and then leave her free to choose between that and him.

"And when I saw Smalley going straight at you, with that Magee woman's proposition about displaying their large sizes, something went crazy in my head, Maggie, and I reached out my arm and held him back. 'You're mistaken,' said I. 'That lady's not your extra full—that's my wife.' And that's your standing at present, Maggie, and you a single woman!"

"James"—and it was her one complaint in her long waiting—"the only fault I have to find with you is that something didn't go crazy in your head years ago!"

When Bobolinks Question

by Alice Louise Lee



Author of "A Victim of St. Valentine," "An Unofficial Investigation," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

THE school board of North Danby was a remarkable body of men in that its members did not relate its secret deliberations to their wives. Therefore, when the board, after a troubled meeting, decided to ask for the resignation of Miss Ellen Crofoot, twenty years a teacher in the graded school of the village, it was expected that the village would not become wise in the matter until Miss Crofoot herself related it.

"Let 'er down easy," the president of the board advised Peter Avery, the secretary. "Tell 'er how we appreciate her past services——"

"Fiddlesticks!" Peter exploded, and cast himself into the outer darkness of a mellow May night. "Darn the principal and his notions!" he added wrathfully to himself as he headed up the hill away from the village. "'Old-fashioned methods!' What if she does teach spelling by doubling the letters? What in thunder is the difference between saying 's-p-e-l-l' and 's-p-e-double l'? The thing that's necessary for the children is to get all the letters in. Bosh! And what if she does teach the alphabet? We'd be fools if we didn't know it, and why not learn it first as last?"

Peter trod the dust resentfully, unmollified by the fact that the road ran between fertile acres which he had only that day added to the many other fertile

acres that constituted the Avery dairy farm. In an unintelligible rumble, he continued his monologue.

"And why in tarnation ain't it as well for writing to point sideways as straight up and down, so long as it can be read? It strikes me we better get an older principal instead of a younger primary teacher. I'd like to see a principal here with less hair on top of his head and more sense inside! Now I'd like to inquire how Ellen Crofoot is going to make a living if we take the school away from her?"

He climbed the hill with long, even strides, tramped across the back porch of his home, banged into the kitchen, bumped against two misplaced chairs, and found the back stairway.

"Petie?" called his mother sleepily from her room at the head of the stairs.

"Petie" loomed six feet tall in the doorway.

"I'm all here, mother. Good night."

"Did you rehire all four teachers?" she asked. But her son dodged the question by not hearing it, as he went to his room. In the absence of a wife, Peter's mother and sisters sought to bore holes in the silence behind which he screened the actions of the school board.

The following day, which was Saturday, he wrote formal notifications to three of the teachers that they were in-



The last letter stuck, either to his fingers or in the opening, he didn't know which.

vited by the school board to remain in the North Danby school another year. He began with the principal, a competent young fellow in his early twenties, who was making of North Danby a stepping-stone to greater things. This letter he sealed with a "Darn his impudence!" To the assistant principal and the secondary teacher he wrote tolerantly. "Here till they find husbands!" he commented, licking the flaps of these letters.

Over the fourth letter he labored long and painfully. Forty years old and relationless was Ellen Crofoot. For twenty years she had come and gone quietly, gently, apparently living only for the primary department of the

graded school. During Peter's service on the board, it had fallen to his lot to gladden the heart of a teacher by the bestowal of a position, but never before had he been called on to sadden a heart by a dismissal.

At length he went forth to the mail box beside the road. In the middle distance came the rural-delivery man, driving rapidly and whistling. Peter pushed in the letter to the principal vindictively. The letters to the husband seekers went next. The last letter stuck, either to his fingers or in the opening, he didn't know which.

"Hello!" said Uncle Sam's servant cheerfully.

"Hello yourself!" responded Peter,

but he frowned in place of his usual broad grin.

"Three letters—m'n," counted the mailman, opening the post box. He read the addresses. "Got their heads last night, did you?" flippantly, as he climbed into his cart.

The frown became a scowl as Peter turned away. In his hand was the only head-hunting letter. He put it into his pocket and went out to direct his men. From the summit of the hill, he looked down on the pleasant, tree-shaded village of North Danby. On the outskirts of the town, at the foot of the long slope that he had so lately acquired, "the old Grow place," was the house that went with the place, a wood-colored, vine-sheltered building, standing picturesquely on a knoll above the highway. Over the long, gentle incline, past the house and on to more distant fields, wheeled the bobolinks, newly arrived. Low over the fields they flew, their white-tipped heads glancing through the sunlight, their small black throats swelled in a piercingly sweet, long-drawn melody.

"Bob-o-link, bob-o-link, what d'ye think? What d'ye think?" they called to each other in a riot of greeting.

Peter made reply: "What I'm thinking ain't fitted for publication. If I don't send the letter, how in tarnation am I going to let 'er know?"

Suddenly, among the tangle of pink and white apple blossoms behind the wood-colored house, against a green background of budding leaves and sprouting grass, appeared a lavender gingham dress closely fitting a tall, straight figure.

"I swan, there she is now!" cried Peter aloud.

Without stopping to consider the end, he plunged down the hill, 'cross lots, leaping ditches, clambering over fences, running across the clean spaces, until he reached the wood-colored house—his house now—and stood facing the pri-

mary teacher. But not until he had said, "Good morning, Ellen," did he wonder profanely why he had come and what he was going to do.

Prior to his finding out, he leaned against a deserted hencoop and thrust his hands into his pockets. His right came in contact with the letter addressed to Miss Ellen Crofoot.

"I—— The bobbies are back," he mentioned, by way of leading up to the subject of primary schools.

Ellen smiled. The North Danby children loved Ellen when she smiled. In order to keep her smiling, the primary department was a model of good behavior.

"I love bobbies best of all the birds," she said softly. "Listen!"

She looked up through the wealth of pink and white blossoms to a joyful couple perched on the topmost twigs, swinging, tilting, swaying, singing, as if the world were a wilderness of sun-flecked, blue-canopied, green-carpeted, flower-perfumed happiness.

"Spink, spank, spick," sang the bobolinks, looking down on Ellen in her new spring lavender gingham, her arms full of apple blossoms, her cheeks delicately pink because of the fact that she had witnessed the headlong oncoming of the secretary of the school board, and had temporarily forgotten that he was the secretary.

The secretary also forgot, momentarily, his official position. His fingers on the letter in his pocket relaxed. Lavender was becoming to Miss Crofoot. So were pink cheeks.

"Bob-o-link, bob-o-link, what d'ye think?" came from the treetop.

"It's difficult to think such a morning as this," Ellen laughed back at the treetop. "Such mornings aren't made to think in."

She had slipped out of the shell of primness and exactness in which twenty years of teaching had incased her, and had stepped back to the springtime of

life. Her cheeks rivalled the blossoms in her arms, and her laughing eyes reflected the sparkle of the morning sun.

"Spink, spank, spick," was uttered softly in the treetop.

"Just so," thought Peter, looking at Ellen. "That bobby has it down pat."

Suddenly the birds departed, winging their way across the meadows, flying low. The spell was broken, and Ellen dropped her gaze in a startled fashion to Peter. Peter jumped imperceptibly and hastily looked down at his feet. He had known Ellen all his life, but he had certainly never seen her in a lavender dress and pink cheeks before. He had really never looked at her, except in her capacity as primary teacher.

The smile faded from Ellen's face. She remembered who Peter was, and that there had been a meeting of the school board the night before. His headlong progress down the slope, of course, had to do solely with the primary teacher, and not with the lover of spring and the bobbies and that romantic old wood-colored house and—

She got into her shell again and the edges met about her.

"Did the board have anything to say about the primary department?" she asked, in her semisevere, prim, school-ma'am voice.

The question took Peter off his guard. The transformation from girlhood to middle-aged teacherhood confused him.

"N-no," he stammered, and then, as the inquiry in her eyes deepened and took on a startled expression, he heard himself adding more loudly and firmly: "No, oh, no!"

A few moments later the two emerged from the house lot, Miss Crofoot flower laden, and became a target for the astonished gaze of a dozen children, on their way woodward. Before night every resident in the village, saving only the Avery family, had been duly informed that Peter Avery and

Ellen Crofoot had been "out walking" together in the morning hours.

Peter, unconscious of the stir he was creating in others, climbed the hill moodily. He was conscious of a profound stirring up in himself.

"It was bad enough before," he thought gloomily, "and now I've gone and made it ten times worse. Well, the board didn't find fault. It's that darned principal! But I've made a mess of it, nevertheless."

Sunday he went to church, not to listen, but to consider the "mess" and a way out of it. He occupied a pew directly behind Ellen Crofoot. In order to see the minister, he would have been obliged to look through a large écrustraw hat, trimmed with lavender-tinted sweet peas. Therefore, he stared at the hat and the lace-trimmed lavender dimity under it, while divers interested eyes watched the stare and speculated on it. When a man and a woman, both forty, are seen taking a morning walk together, a stare is ample material out of which to build a romance. There was no romance, however, troubling the thoughts of the secretary of the school board.

"What does she say about it?" whispered the president of the board after the service.

Peter scowled down from his greater altitude on the broader latitude of his chief.

"She hasn't said yet," he responded noncommittally.

"We ought to know before the Thursday night meeting," said the president, "because we've got to elect another teacher."

At four o'clock that afternoon, Peter rose up from the bench under the budding lilac bush beside his hill dwelling, and said aloud grimly, "The better the day, the better the deed," and marched off down the hill.

He had on his best clothes, which wouldn't happen on Monday, and he



"I love bobbies best of all the birds," she said softly. "Listen!"

wanted to enjoy a good night's sleep, which he had not enjoyed the previous night. Hence, in his official capacity as secretary of the school board, he sought the boarding place of the primary teacher. The Smiths, with whom Ellen had boarded for five years, did not see in the approaching caller any official capacity. It was Sunday afternoon, Peter was in his Sunday togs, and had been "out walking" once with Ellen; sufficient reasons for Mrs. Smith's making a hasty and excited collection of the junior Smiths and hustling them into the house. Not far in, however, as divers small noses and ears and eyes behind the curtains of the open windows proved. Mrs. Smith herself did not peek. She heroically pounded the piano until the discords attracted the attention of the entire street.

Peter sat down limply and miserably in the chair vacated by Mrs. Smith. He

could have choked the late occupant for her appallingly significant retreat.

"It's another fine day, Ellen," he mumbled against the crashing of the piano within.

Ellen leaned forward. "I—I didn't hear," she replied.

"Fine day, I said," shouted Peter, across the space that separated them.

The oldest Smith child gave a sudden giggle and fell against the window sill, bulging the curtain outward. The family across the way tripped out and occupied their porch, facing the Smiths. The temperature arose ten degrees. Peter wiped off his face hastily and fought for breath. He certainly couldn't tell Miss Crofoot there that the school board requested her resignation. Ellen glanced at him shyly and made an inaudible remark. A party of young people next door cut a song in two and flocked to the side windows.

"By the great horn spoon!" swore Peter, below his breath. Above it he bawled: "What's that you said?"

"Are the bobolinks singing to-day around the old Grow place?" faltered Ellen.

Peter paused in the act of mopping his face again. He arose decisively, with the light of inspiration in his eyes, just as the next house disgorged its contents of young people. They clattered watchfully out on the side porch.

"I'd rather hear the music of the bobbies than this racket, Ellen. Let's go over to the Grow place," suggested Peter, grabbing his hat. His ownership of the old Grow place was not yet known in the village.

Ellen went. She walked straight and prim beside Peter until they reached the wood-colored house with its tangle of uncared-for foliage, its surprises of flowers peeping up here and there in the old garden, its blossoming apple the old garden, its blossoming trees, and its joyful bobolinks.

They sat down on a fallen apple tree, far from curious eyes and the discord of strident pianos, and immediately the freshness and fragrance, the glory and exultation, of spring fell over them, snuffing out Peter's determination to earn for himself peace of mind and a good night's sleep.

"Bob-o-link, bob-o-link, what do you think?" called Ellen merrily to the songsters balanced on timothy head, concealed in the lush grass, poised in the treetops.

One saucy fellow, his head cocked on one side, surveyed the trim figure, the lavender dimity, and the sweet face above it, and sang softly: "Spink, spank, spick!" Then he flew away, taking Ellen's shell with him.

"Do you know what I'm going to do when I own this old place?" she asked suddenly.

Peter gasped. "When you own——"

Ellen nodded. She smiled back at the old house.

"It's a secret, but I'll tell you. After I've taught two years longer, I'll have enough to buy this place. I've been planning and planning for it for years. Let's look through the windows," she cried eagerly, "and I'll tell you how it's going to be furnished—after two more years of teaching."

Peter stumbled after her light feet. Once he groaned, but when Ellen paused to inquire into the source of his pain, he was nursing a thumb assiduously and an imaginary sliver.

As they peeked into the windows like two children—while she furnished the house to her taste, but beyond her pocketbook—he had not the courage to destroy her illusion by telling her that the old Grow place had been merged into the Avery dairy farm. That other illusion about teaching two years longer was more than he felt competent to handle, and when he again turned his face toward home, the duties of his office on the school board remained unfulfilled.

"If there's one fool bigger than all the other fools in this county," he told himself as he climbed the hill, "I'm it."

The following day, after a restless night, he devoted himself to doing his farm work and to avoiding the eyes of any passing members of the school board.

Tuesday, being only two days distant from the board meeting, saw the dawn of a new resolve.

"I'll visit her schoolroom," he told himself. "That'll seem a natural thing for a member of the school board to do. Then at recess, just as a matter of business, I'll tell 'er—— Darn that principal!"

He resolutely proceeded to don his second-best suit and repair to the graded school, first floor, room to the right. No sooner had Miss Crofoot, incased in her shell, straight and prim

and "set" in her school methods, opened the door at his knock, than Peter saw that his opinion of his own ability to make a fool of himself was by no means ill founded, for into every pupil's small face flashed a childish reflex of all the speculation rampant in the village during the last two days. The little Smiths could scarcely remain in their seats, so great was their desire to race home with news of this last act in a drama that even their infantile minds could grasp.

As for the teacher herself, the woman in her began instantly to push restlessly against the professional shell. She greeted and seated her visitor primly, but the red was pulsing through her cheeks. Concisely she laid a primer before him—at the obnoxious alphabet—but her voice trembled as she said:

"Children, attention!"

Only the fact that her smile was absent caused the buzz in the room to subside and each little head to bend above pencil or book. That smile must be coaxed back at all hazards. It did not return, however, until recess, the time sacred to the promulgation of the decree of the school board. But the decree was set aside unconsciously by a very small girl with a very round face, who brought a handful of limp and wilted lilacs to teacher's desk and climbed into teacher's lap with some whispered message that brought the smile to the bright eyes and pink cheeks.

But when Peter, standing by, saw the small soiled hands, unrebuked, pressed lovingly against the pink cheeks, something lodged in his throat just under his Adam's apple, so impairing his powers of speech that he beat a hasty and disordered retreat in the direction of the Avery dairy farm, asking himself repeatedly what in thunder a fellow was going to do! When he passed the old Grow place, he swallowed his Adam's apple again. The wood-colored house

behind its barricade of green reproached him. It was up to him, he considered bitterly, to disappoint Ellen in two ways.

"Old-fashioned in her methods, is she?" he broke out wrathfully. "Well, I'd like to see some young fuzzy hussy of a teacher mothering a dirty little girl the way she did——"

Here Peter broke off, performed gastronomic feats with the lump in his throat, and kicked the stones out of the way up the hill to his home, while on either side of the road the saucy, knowing bobolinks bombarded him with the pertinent question: "What d'ye think? What d'ye think?"

He sat late that night on the bench beneath the lilac bush, while the sun sank behind the western hills and the shrill calls of the robin pierced the melody of the bobolinks on the long slope beneath. The fragrance of the apple blossoms on the old Grow place was wafted to him on a warm breeze.

"Petie," called his mother that night, when he was stumbling upstairs alone in the dark; "Petie, come here!"

Peter obeyed the summons obediently and sat down on the side of his mother's bed. She put out an old hand and laid it on his.

"Petie, I just heard to-day. I'm glad it's going to happen, and the girls are gladder yet. You see, my boy, the girls and I want to get out and go some before we all get too old." She chuckled and patted the big hand. "We think we'll spend the winter in town or else go South, and we couldn't leave unless you were well taken care of—— And, Petie, there's the house on the old Grow place for one family——"

When Peter finally reached his room, only one thing was clear to him—his mother had not in the least believed his denials.

"Ah, Petie, I've heard boys talk before!" she had told him dryly.

Therefore, the forty-year-old "boy"



Ellen leaned forward. "I—I didn't hear," she replied. "Fine day, I said," shouted Peter.

stood in front of his window and stared blankly down the grassy slope lying soft and dim under the rays of a full moon, which cast a silvery veil over the picturesque old Grow place, the haunt of the bobolinks. The fragrance of the apple blossoms came in at his open window, and with it came the picture of Ellen, in her lavender dress and pink cheeks, smiling above an armful of flowers. Although Peter was capable of feeling harmony, he was incapable of expressing it, and when he turned from the window, it was with a groan and a "Hang it all! What in thunderation is a fellow going to do? That board meets day after to-morrow."

Wednesday he neglected his work in the morning and deserted it entirely in

the afternoon. Leaving his men to get along without direction, he retired to the old Grow place.

"I want to look around down there and see what's got to be done," he told his helpers—and himself. But what he actually did was to sit down on a fallen apple tree and stare at the bobolinks flitting and singing and swinging all about him.

"What d'ye think? What d'ye think?" they invited.

"That infernal board meets to-morrow," Peter answered absently aloud. "And I—well—I'm all at sea."

Presently he aroused himself and looked around. His gaze fell on the back window of the living room in the wood-colored house. That room was to

be furnished in tan and brown, with a bit of red to brighten it, when Ellen had taught two years longer and could buy the place of old Mr. Grow. Red—that's sort of a first cousin to pink, dreamed Peter, and he liked pink. It was his favorite color, so far as he had ever thought about color—pink and that other color that looked something like the lilacs nodding in front of the kitchen window— Bare floors there, Ellen had said, with linoleum— Peter arose hastily and stalked up the hill.

"What d'ye think? What d'ye think?" arose from his feet.

"That there's no fool like an old fool!" responded Peter promptly, after which he stared fixedly at the road without seeing it.

It was nearly six o'clock when he sat under the lilac bush and repeated this sentiment with an accruing bitterness. It had no reference, however, to the board meeting, twenty-four hours off.

"There's no fool like an old fool," he muttered aloud, his head bent. But as his own voice reached his ears, his head came up with a jerk and his face glowed with a sudden whimsical light. "Unless," he amended aloud, "there's two of 'em!"

He came to his feet with a bound just as his mother's voice sounded from the back door:

"Petie! Petie! Sup-per!"

He paused. From the open door came his sister's voice: "Oh, I expect he's mooning around somewhere, maybe down at Smiths'." Then the door closed, and past it tiptoed the guilty Peter on his way to Smiths'.

He rang the Smith doorbell boldly, not noticing the clatter of dishes in the dining room at the end of the hall. Nor did he notice that he was not clad in his Sunday togs, nor yet in his second best, but in his blue denim overalls and dickey. His thoughts could compass nothing beyond the idea expressed in

these words: "Unless there's two of 'em!"

Ellen Crofoot herself came to the door, and when she saw who stood there, she gave a faint ejaculation. Her sweet face paled, then into her cheek came Peter's recently discovered favorite color.

"Ellen," said Peter directly, abruptly, "suppose you get your hat and come over to the old Grow place with me. I want to tell you something, and I can't tell it with forty-seven Smith children falling all over the outskirts of our vicinity. Besides—the bobbies are having a class meeting over there, and—a love feast."

When the school board met the following evening, the secretary was the last to assemble himself. He came sauntering in, with the big book of records clasped negligently under one arm, his hat on the back of his head, while beneath his chin reposed a flaming red tie, the color of the victorious.

"Well," asked the president informally and anxiously, "have you brought Ellen Crofoot's resignation?"

"I have not," replied the secretary, slamming the book down on the table. "I've not mentioned resignation to 'er!"

Six men glanced at him in dismay.

"Now I sh'd like to ask why not——" began the president.

"It would be time wasted," explained the secretary cheerfully. "She will resign automatically within a month. She's going to be married."

The president gasped. He lived three miles from the village and village news.

"Married? What? Ellen Crofoot! Who to?"

"To a decent and very willing party," snapped Peter, turning red. "Now is there a thing to hinder us from boning down to the business of selecting a new primary teacher?"

THAT REFRACTORY TOOTH

BY
RUTH HERRICK MYERS



Author of "The Wish Grave," "When Knights Were Bold," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

ONE of Elizabeth Ann's loose teeth finally dropped out.

"It gives me the same feeling precisely," she told Mr. Eaton, "as to look at the row of houses across the street from school, where they moved away the old Hubbard house and left a vacant lot. I love to put my tongue in it."

"In the vacant lot," queried Mr. Eaton politely from behind his round glasses.

Elizabeth Ann, looking annoyed, ignored the witticism. It was not often that Mr. Eaton sank to such a cheap form of humor, and it did not become him at all. She felt that a lawyer could do much better than that if he tried, and she liked to have people try—when they talked with her.

"I can recall the feeling exactly," Mr. Eaton hurriedly added, noting the displeasure in the atmosphere. "Once I had a tooth that was especially refractory and refused to come out, so my great-aunt connected it to the bedpost with a string and the extraction was accomplished to our mutual satisfaction."

This was much better, Elizabeth Ann felt.

"I believe one of mine is going to be refractory, too," she observed with anxiety. "See! It's the front one. It's waggled for a long time."

"I trust not," Mr. Eaton replied courteously, also assuming an anxious air.

"Well," Elizabeth Ann sighed. "Let come what will! Was that the same four-poster that she used to lift you into from the little steps?"

"The same identically. She used to lift me over and drop me into the middle of the great feather bed, where I sank down and down and down until the sides were 'way over my head."

"Wasn't that gorgeous? Then she slowly descended the steps, and blew out the candle——"

"——leaving me in semidarkness."

Elizabeth Ann absolutely adored Mr. Eaton. He just hit the spot always, like one of Callie's caraway cookies after school, or like buckwheat cakes and maple sirup on the morning of the first snowstorm. He was her father's partner and a bachelor, as was Professor Waldo Jagen, her music teacher. There was this distinction, however, that Mr. Eaton was liked and admired by both ladies and gentlemen, whereas Professor Jagen was admired merely by ladies and his small pupils.

Mr. Eaton's black beard rounded slightly on its lower edge, but its upper outlines formed a peak to the center of his lips, leaving a little bare spot on each side of his chin. The effect, there-

fore, starting from his hair, which was smoothly parted in the middle, was like a Cupid's bow, bent, or an inverted heart. It gave an impression of symmetry and exactness that was completed by neat red lips and harmonious brown eyes framed in round, gold-rimmed glasses.

Once Doctor Courtney's horse, which Mr. Eaton had been petting, had lifted its head suddenly and knocked the glasses off, breaking them into fragments. It would have shocked Elizabeth Ann less to see shattered the circular, stained-glass window in the chapel. She could not bear to look at Mr. Eaton until his glasses were replaced on his nose, and his eyes looked forth once more from the exact center of the new glass circles.

Elizabeth Ann proved a good prophet. The front tooth was refractory, and insisted upon dangling for a full week by a section of gum that steadfastly refused to part with its beloved companion of years; at least, that was the way Elizabeth Ann interpreted its stubbornness, and she felt sorry for the little strip of red skin that held so tenaciously.

"You might feel that way, too," she told her mother, "if you hadn't been separated from that tooth since I was six months old."

"I can't help it," insisted her mother. "It makes me nervous to have it wabbling there whenever you talk. And you fuss with it so. Do keep your hand away, dear!"

"Pull it out! Pull it out!" suggested Mr. Gale.

"We may yet have to resort to the bedpost," observed Mr. Eaton, who was also present.

"I think it'll drop out by itself," answered Elizabeth Ann hastily, "in time."

Nevertheless, such was not the case. The ravages of time, whatever else they demolished, left Elizabeth Ann's front

tooth unscathed. It hung persistently between its fellows, as if loath to leave such pleasant company, refusing to yield either to gentle jerks or to slow, cautious pressure.

"You'll just have to go up to Doctor Iliffe and have it out," Mrs. Gale concluded with determination.

"I don't want to go," protested her small daughter. "It'll hurt, and, besides, I don't like Doctor Iliffe. He reminds me of a fish."

"A fish!"

"Yes. His hair is so light that it's almost ir-ir-iridescent, like fish scales, and his eyes are cold and blue and watery. I always want to poke them in, the way Callie lets me do with a fish."

This was a form of mild barbarism in which the otherwise loving and gentle Elizabeth Ann took fiendish delight. It was a ghastly thing to see her push a fish eye down into its socket, and probably if Callie had not possessed a few lingering cannibalistic instincts of her own, handed down from her Afric forefathers, she would not have permitted it.

"Nevertheless," Mrs. Gale stated decidedly, "I won't be annoyed with that tooth any longer. I'll call the doctor up and make a date for you."

Mother was not like father. After she had arrived at a certain point, wheedlings were disastrous, rather than effective.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do," Mr. Eaton proposed, after hearing the ultimatum. "Wait a minute! Suppose, now, you were Cinderella, and I your fairy godmother. Can you stretch your imagination to grasp that situation?"

"It's stretched," replied Elizabeth Ann, after a brief intermission for the accomplishment of the act.

"Now, if you could have one wish come true, what would you choose?"

This was an extremely delicate situation, but finally Elizabeth Ann arrived at a conclusion.



Once Mr. Eaton had told her a fairy story.

"I'd go and see 'Petite Collette,' the smallest woman in the world, over at the Grand Opera House. She's only twenty-seven inches high, perfectly formed, and has command of each and every faculty. She speaks six lan-

guages with equal ease, and sings and dances and gives every one her picture with her name across the back of it."

"Where did you acquire all this information?" asked Mr. Eaton, flushing slightly.

Elizabeth Ann also grew pink as she replied: "Herb Ellsworth was telling me."

Mr. Eaton was a man of honor and a gentleman of his word. Having assumed the rôle of fairy godmother, he shouldered its responsibilities without faltering, and declared:

"You shall go to-morrow, Elizabeth Ann, if you will have your tooth out first without making any fuss about it."

"Can't I go to any one but Doctor Iliffe?"

"No," Mrs. Gale interrupted firmly. "He's a client of your father's, and it's a matter of business. Besides, he won't hurt a bit worse than any one else."

"Well!" groaned Elizabeth, rocking her tooth with her tongue. "If I must, I must!"

Very dreamily it crossed her sleepy mind the next morning early that it was Saturday, and that she was to go that afternoon to the theater with Mr. Eaton; whereupon, memories of Mr. Eaton flitted pleasantly across her half-awake dreams. Once he had written her a letter twenty-five pages long, with a single sentence on each page. Sometimes it had walked around the edges of the sheets; sometimes it had climbed several greater and lesser hills; once it had started at the top left-hand corner and come to the center, winding up there, and then unwinding like a cotillion figure, and returning at length to another corner of the page for the final period; but each new sheet had held a fresh surprise and an original conceit, whether it had climbed or circled or chasséed to its completion. Elizabeth Ann had worn the letter quite out, carrying it about showing it to people.

Once Mr. Eaton had told her a fairy story about a captive princess whose hair grew so long that she made a ladder of it to aid her lover prince to ascend to her tower. Elizabeth Ann had found the story not long afterward—with alterations—in a fairy-tale book

at the library, and had corrected Mr. Eaton's version at her earliest opportunity.

Once they had purchased a box of chocolates on their way home from town, and on the car Mr. Eaton and Elizabeth Ann had each slipped a bon-bon surreptitiously into a watering mouth; which was quite improper, and embarrassing as well for Mr. Eaton, since he had unfortunately chosen one that was covered with tinfoil, and was, therefore, forced to consume the entire mouthful, wrapping and all, rather than disclose his mistake to a number of friends who sat opposite.

At this point Callie, whose feet were none too small, clumped down the uncarpeted back stairs to get breakfast, and Elizabeth Ann, rousing at the sound, woke up fully, and found, to her dismay, that the loose tooth had finally severed itself from its beloved companion of years, and lay detached under her tongue. Now here was a pretty how-do-you-do, indeed! She was to see "Petite Collette" merely as a reward for her heroism in having this tooth out, and now it had dropped out of itself, and robbed the would-be heroine of her opportunity. But hold! What if—Elizabeth Ann sat up in bed—what if no one were to know that it had dropped out? If she could keep the secret of its absence from mother and Mr. Eaton—what then?

A twinge of uneasiness assailed her. There was Doctor Iliffe! Elizabeth Ann knew that he had no sense of understanding or humor, because once, while Elizabeth Ann had been in the office, a lady had quite by accident swallowed a fifteen-dollar gold filling, and he had really been quite hateful about it. He had told her that she was not to blame, of course, that he would pay, he supposed; but he had said it all in a very disgruntled manner, as if he really thought she had no right ever to swallow at all. Elizabeth Ann could not

see but what swallowing was an inoffensive act of nature, common to all humanity, and had grown very indignant about it, all to herself.

However, despite Doctor Iliffe, she decided to proceed as if the refractory tooth had not failed her in this crisis. She came down to breakfast late, so that she could eat in solitude; she mumbled her replies so that, while she talked, no one could view the spot where the ancient tooth had stood; and she hung her head at a queer angle, lest she should inadvertently open her mouth and give away the fatal secret. If it had only been one of her molars, it would have been so much easier to conceal.

The tooth itself, together with some others which had fallen out previously, she had laid away on some pink cotton in a small, gray pasteboard box with the jeweler's name engraved—she knew it was engraved, because she invariably ran her forefinger over the lettering to make sure—on the cover. And having labeled it freshly on a clean slip of paper: "Teeth. Elizabeth Ann," she had put it neatly with the rest of the boxes in the drawer of her white commode.

Dressed in her best red frock and black velvet coat with the lace collar, Elizabeth Ann Gale ascended to Doctor Iliffe's office with her escort, Mr. Eaton, to have her tooth out, preparatory—indeed as a sort of overture, she felt—to the symphony of the afternoon.

"I will go in alone," she announced, when the summons came to enter the inner sanctum of the dreaded chair.

"If it would make it easier for me to go in with you—" suggested Mr. Eaton, rising.

"Oh, no," the patient rejoined hurriedly. "I'd so much rather go alone."

She shut the door after her.

It was just as Elizabeth Ann had feared. Doctor Iliffe looked at her as he might have inspected a strange spe-

cies of brother fish from an unknown river.

"Well, what made you come up at all?"

"Because," repeated Elizabeth Ann, with a weary sigh, "if I didn't come up to have it out, there wouldn't be any reason why he should take me to see 'Petite Collette.'"

"But you say it dropped out—"

"While I still slept, yes. That's just where the trouble comes in."

It was so plain to Elizabeth Ann!

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

This was uttered with a supercilious smile that maddened Elizabeth Ann, and a look in his pale blue, contemptuous eyes that was unforgettable. It was as if the brother fish had turned out to be only an eel or a crawdad.

"If you will wait just a moment," she replied icily, with the air of a great lady, "I'll give one muffled shriek that he can overhear, and then I'll not take any more of your time. There are so many waiting."

The office, by the way, was quite destitute of future patients. Mr. Eaton, sitting there alone, suddenly heard a choked scream from the other side of the door that caused queer little quivers to chase one another around the corners of his neat, red mouth.

"There!" Elizabeth Ann said, looking at Doctor Iliffe triumphantly. "Just a moment longer! He'll think I'm rinsing my mouth." She laid her hand on the doorknob. "Now he'll think I'm putting on my hat." Another pause. "Now," smiling so that her front row of teeth showed nicely, with the refractory one missing, "now I'll go out. Thank you, very much, and please don't tell him anything about it."

Mr. Eaton had risen.

"Was it very bad?" he inquired solicitously. "Where is the tooth, Elizabeth Ann?"

A blank look overspread the features under the broad-brimmed velvet hat.



"I can't go in," she told him in a pained voice. "I can't go in. I cheated."

"That," observed Doctor Iliffe, with intense irony, from the doorway, "is a question well put."

Elizabeth Ann flushed indignantly. Ignoring Doctor Iliffe, she walked out of the office with her head up, and Mr. Eaton followed, much mystified.

"Was anything wrong? Where is the tooth? You didn't swallow it?"

"Certainly I didn't. I never could stand Doctor Iliffe, and now I hate him."

The feeling pursued Elizabeth Ann that she had made herself ridiculous, and would always experience that pleasurable sensation whenever she saw or thought of Doctor Iliffe. She hated him more violently than ever, just because of it, for you would really think that a dentist could do a small favor for an old patient without being so disagreeable. Elizabeth glared angrily in front of her and swung her skirts as she walked down "the avenue" of the town to the opera house, recalling with twinges of mortification every look and inflection that had conveyed so vividly Doctor Iliffe's impression of her.

Still puzzled, Mr. Eaton excused himself while he purchased the tickets in the lobby, and Elizabeth Ann stood with her hands clenched in her little muff, waiting for him. Since "Petite Collette" was a very popular attraction, the purchase took some time, and Elizabeth Ann had time to undergo many changes of emotion during the interval. She was quite tingling with emotion, her eyes were black, and her face was pale, as wave after wave of feeling swept over her. She was, as her mother would have said, "all worked up," a state that was not at all uncommon to the child, and dated from the days of her infancy, when she used to lie on the floor and bang her head against the wall to express her pro or con sentiments. In such a "spell" she was very much like a weather vane, and would turn whichever way the strong-

est current moved her; so that Mr. Eaton, returning at length, found to his amazement an entirely different Elizabeth Ann from the one he had left.

"I can't go in," she told him, in a pained voice. "I can't go in. I cheated. My tooth was out when I went up to Doctor Iliffe's. It was out when I woke up. It fell out while I still slept, and I just made believe have it out at the dentist's. We'll have to go back home."

It was Elizabeth Ann's old arch enemy, conscience, who had turned the weather vane. Against him she had no influence, and he gave her no peace until after confession and expiation.

"I haven't earned 'Petite Collette' at all, you see," she moaned to Mr. Eaton. "I cheated."

Once Mrs. Gale had said to Mr. Eaton: "You're so successful with Elizabeth Ann. How do you do it?"

"I like to watch her make up her own mind," he had answered.

He remembered his answer now, and continued to act upon it, as he slipped the tickets into his pocket and stood awaiting Elizabeth Ann's verdict on her case.

"What shall we do about it?" he inquired anxiously.

Elizabeth Ann gave a nervous laugh, a laugh that was almost a sob.

"Isn't it awful?" she apologized. "And now you've gone and spent the money for the tickets. You go in alone, Mr. Eaton, or—or take some one else."

Mr. Eaton, whose personal taste did not lead to "Petite Collette's" shrine, objected to this. There was a long silence.

"What time is it?" asked the sinner suddenly.

"Five minutes of two. We have twenty minutes yet."

"Would it make any difference to you which tooth I had out, just so long as it hurt and I was brave?"

"Not a bit," replied Mr. Eaton cheerfully.



"Pull this one, please!" commanded Elizabeth Ann.

Elizabeth Ann investigated several incisors with the tip of her tongue.

"Here's a pretty loose one," she announced. "If I have Doctor Iliffe pull this, are you sure it will earn 'Petite Collette' just as much as the other?"

"Precisely."

Back they went to the dentist's office. Off came Elizabeth Ann's hat. Down into the chair she dropped with the air of a soldier marching to his death.

"Pull this one, please!" commanded Elizabeth Ann, pointing.

But Doctor Iliffe was loath to pull

the little white incisor, whose powers of motion were still in the incipient stage.

"It's not ready to pull yet," he argued. "Leave it alone. It will come out by itself all right."

"I want it out," repeated Elizabeth Ann. She was so furious with herself that she was in quite a state of frenzy.

"It will hurt!"

"I want it out."

"Go ahead!" commanded Mr. Eaton in an undertone.

In another moment Elizabeth Ann,

with a dizzy head and a subdued spirit, rose from her chair. She held out her hand.

"I want the tooth," she murmured faintly, almost inaudibly. "I'm thaving them for ivory piano keyth to a piano Herb Ellthworth ith making my doll."

Small wonder that Doctor Iliffe looked, after his patient had gone, as if he had met an undiagnosable case. He said something to himself as he rinsed out his tumbler and laid his instruments away in the swinging drawers.

But Elizabeth Ann, safe in the darkened theater, watching "Petite Collette" circle and pirouette on tiny, twinkling feet, like a veritable French dolly, gave a prodigious sigh.

"Penny for your thoughts," whis-

pered Mr. Eaton. "Are we perfectly happy?"

"Oh, yeth!" breathed Elizabeth Ann blissfully. Then she modified her statement a bit, adding: "Exthept that I almoth with I wath a therpent."

"A serpent!" repeated Mr. Eaton, not commenting on the fact that her late tooth had been a rather important one. Neither did he smile at her new pronunciation.

"Yeth, a therpent with a forked tongue. Then I could lay a pieth of tongue in every—in every— Oh, where your teeth are gone, you know."

"Aperture?" suggested Mr. Eaton.

"Oh, yeth, that word juth fith," murmured Elizabeth Ann. "In every aperture!"

The Night Nurse

UPON the roofs beneath the sky
The frozen snows lie fair,
And mute and high the stars go by—
Orion and the Bear.
But this wide hallway where I sit
Is warm, and one faint lamp is lit.

For all about me sick folk dream
The broken dreams of pain,
Each soul adrift upon a stream
Whose course is never plain.
Yet they rest well, my wards, to-night—
Stay! Is that face *too* still and white?

Nay, all is well, and none has passed
The door I guard this hour—
The portal of that country, vast
And dim, beyond my power—
Lest, 'twixt the sunset and the gray,
One should slip through and glide away.

So runs my night—the listening ear
For trilling bell, or sigh
From lips so parched I scarce can hear.
And then the reddened sky
And weariness that sinks so deep
I may turn day to night—and *sleep!*

RHEEM DOUGLAS.

GINGERING IT UP By



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

IT came to pass.

The unbelievable happened.

And flags draped it, music spiced it, and the spirit of good cheer crowned it.

Oil and water mixed at last.

The lion lay down with the lamb.

However, those phrases do not describe the situation. Better say that cat and dog finally fraternized at the same saucer.

Because, after years of hatred and conflict at musters, the two great rivals of the county came together at the festal board in amity. The Intrepid Veterans of Vienna journeyed over the town line into neighboring Scotaze in order to sit down at table and forget all differences with the Scotaze Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association. Plan arranged and banquet furnished by that artful diplomat and liberal host, Foreman Hiram Look, of the Ancients.

In view of the fact that these two organizations—made up of the leading men of the two towns, elderly gentlemen who had carried their rancor for years—had never had a decent word to say to or about each other before, Hiram's diplomacy was a triumph. He had been obliged to smooth animosities, cajole enemies, heal breaches, explain away hateful instances of injustice, and make dim the memory of past conflicts.

It was a tough job. He ran up against all the spurs, knobs, prickly points, and hot places, of grudges nourished for a generation.

But when he finally did get the thing patched up and slicked over, the ancient enemies fairly rushed into each other's arms, as if they had been waiting all the years for just that opportunity.

Foreman Look pulled it off in May. The gentle spring wonderfully calms the asperities of human beings.

On a calm and benignant afternoon, the populace of Scotaze flocked forth into the flag-wrapped village square, put on a welcoming smile, smoothed down best bib and tucker, and waited for the parade.

Foreman Look had led his Ancients to the town line, there to meet and greet the visitors.

For Cap'n Aaron Sproul, when he arrived on the scene, the people made way respectfully and gave him clear passage to the front row. Uncle Lemuel Jordan, who had been holding his position in that row by dint of his wriggings and his sharp elbows, gave the cap'n a side glance that held considerable petty animosity.

"It's always the style of the world to make way for the crowned heads," he observed testily. "Always has been so —always will be so, I suppose."

"You ain't referring to *me* as a crowned head, are you?" demanded the cap'n, exhibiting no very amiable temper of his own.

"You're the high sheriff of this county, king of all you survey, ain't you?"

"He's got a bigger honor than that for this day," remarked a bystander, with admiration. "And I want to say that when they picked you out for toastmaster of the biggest banquet this county has ever seen, Cap'n Sproul, they picked just the right man. And if there's any man who deserves to have the front row to-day, here or anywhere else, you're the man. I call for three cheers for Cap'n Sproul, toastmaster."

They were given with great gusto.

Cap'n Sproul, who had been shanghaied into that position in spite of his best protests, did not display great enthusiasm as he flourished a sea salute in reply to the cheers.

"I ain't begrudging you your honors," vouchsafed Uncle Jordan. "There ain't any good going to come out of this affair, anyway. This nussing a rattlesnake and taking the serpent into your bosom ain't what it's cracked up to be."

"Oh, shut up, you old rat-tailed file!" bawled a man in the crowd. "We're met here to forgive and forget and to be merry and gay, and we don't want any more of that cussed rasping."

"I'm an American citizen, with a perfect right to say anything in public when I want to," insisted Uncle Jordan, welcoming a fuss in order to pass away the time. "I say it's best to let sleeping lions rest—though I ain't complimenting them Vienny critters by calling 'em lions. As the thing stood, we was well shet of 'em. We've outskirted 'em at muster more times than they have us. We've always been able to wrassle 'em or lick 'em. We can do it again—and what's the use of coaxing 'em into our town and cuddling 'em up

and stuffing good grub into 'em, just as if we was afraid of 'em. I want to tell this crowd—"

"You batten that old main hatch of yours," commanded the cap'n. "You're the only man in this town that ain't full of good cheer and forgiveness to-day—and I ain't going to let your old clapper-trap spoil the occasion."

"You can't boss me. Your job ain't begun as toastmaster yet."

"Yes, it has," retorted Cap'n Sproul, warming to the possibilities of his unsought office. "I'm general manager of the gab that's allowed to be handed out in this town to-day, and if you say any more to bring a smirch on us, I'll use your ear for a handle and carry you home."

The crowd gave too hearty indorsement of that threat for even Uncle Jordan's querulous obstinacy.

"Go along, crowned head, and lead the fools with you," he muttered. "But I've got my own opinion of coddling vipers, and I've given my warning."

Two minutes later Uncle Jordan and his pessimism were forgotten. Far down the elm-shaded street appeared the "vipers," escorted in style by their coddlers.

The fife-and-drum corps of the Ancients led, and the plangor of thwacked sheepskin and the merry trilling of the fifes set the souls of all listeners to lilt-ing. The tune was the venerable war song of the Ancients, and every man in the waiting throng was able to supply the words as the fifes phrased the melody:

"Here wec-come from old Scot-az-e,
Here wec-come with Hecky One.
We're the boys and she's a daisy.
Here we are for fight or fun.
Shang-de-rango! We're the bo-kay!
Don't giveadam for no one, noway."

Each man of the Ancients was in full panoply. He wore a red shirt, his trousers were stuffed into his boots, his scoop hat shielded his head with a broad

fluke covering his back. His bed wrench was slung from a cord about his neck, and the big bag for salvage work, with its puckering string, was suspended from his waist. Each man carried a horn and joined in the occasional chorus of blasts that drowned out the fifes and drums. Foreman Look's venerable elephant, "Imogene," furnished motive power for the hand tub "Hecla No. 1." It was decorated with bunting and flags, and its little wheels "chuckled" on their axles, as if trying to express some of the general joy of the occasion. Over Imogene's broad back was hung a banner which promulgated the inscription: "Peace on earth, good will to men."

Behind this notable escort followed the guests—the Vienna Veterans, trundling their redoubtable hand tub, "Niagara." Niagara was flag-wreathed to the tips of her handlebars, and the rope with which she was drawn was braided red-white-and-blue bunting. Ten men served as bearers of a banner that stretched its sinuous length for thirty feet down the street. It heralded: "Blessed are the bonds of brotherhood."

Foreman Hiram Look headed his men, wearing a new plug hat with a red-white-and-blue cockade.

Vienna was led by a wizened old man, whose eyes, as beady as those of a rat, were tightly pinched in beside his nose. His thin lips were working constantly and wordlessly. It was averred by those who knew old Brad Trufant well that he was always silently rehearsing new lines of profanity to use when he straddled the brake beam at muster and proceeded to exhort his men.

The assembled Scotaze citizens got a surprise when the Ancients swung into the village square. They heard new words for the sacred war song; to that tune the Ancients were singing a pæan to their guests. And if that offering did not signalize perfect and everlasting peace, what could?

"Here they come from old Vienny,
Here they come—hooray, say we.
Help yourselves, boys, one or many,
Town is yours and here's the key.
Take all you want in sight, gosh blame it!
If 'tain't in sight, step up and name it."

As soon as the crowd gathered the gist of the new words, it joined in the chorus and seconded the invitation.

The two organizations counter-marched in the square, and halted, with the two hand tubs lined amicably side by side. The Ancients cheered the Intrepids, the Intrepids cheered the Ancients, and the crowd cheered both.

Willing hands lifted Hiram Look to the top of tub Hecla No. 1. He removed his cockaded hat, held it in the crook of his arm, and bombarded the throng vocally with a voice that had been roughened by many years of barking in front of Look's Leviathan Circus.

"Ladies and gents, feller citizens, and honored guests of the occasion: This is the proudest moment of my life. It shows that the world is moving. It shows that war ain't popular any more. Welcome to everybody, and a good time, one and all. I want to say to the Niagarys that the town is theirs—take hold and help yourselves."

"That's the only way they'd ever get anything in this town—have it handed to 'em. They could never get up gump-tion enough to grab it away," grumbled Uncle Jordan.

"As for the banquet that your humble servant is going to tender at town hall, I want to say that I have never stood treat in a better cause or spent money so cheerfully. Pitch into it, and eat your heads off—that's my special invite. Come one, come all; let's make this a festive day, ladies and gents. All the trouble between Vienny and Scotaze has been buried deep, and to-day we'll dance a jig on top of the grave."

Vociferous voices, noisy horns, and slapping palms indorsed that speech, and then hands lifted Uncle Brad Tru-



"It's always the style of the world to make way for the crowned heads," he observed testily.

fant to the top of tub Niagara, and, with a voice as shrill as a fife, he squealed response:

"Ladies, gents, and all others: In behalf of the visiting firemen, I say we're glad to be here. I want to say that Foreman Look is a wonderful man. I never expected to come into this town without carrying a club in each hand and needing an eye in the back of my head."

"I consider that a slur," barked Uncle Jordan. "We never had to sneak up behind an enemy yet."

A chorus of horrified protests drowned out his voice.

"There's allus a yaller dog in every pack," squalled Uncle Trufant.

"And now he goes to calling us dogs," declared Uncle Jordan, leaping away from the hands that were out-thrust to seize him. "He has grabbed a sneaking chance to sass and slur us."

"I slapped your old chops for you once on a time, and I see you are still letting it rangle, Lem Jordan," returned

Uncle Trufant, in tones that cut through the uproar. "I can do it again, even if I *am* seventy and over."

Cap'n Sproul set heavy hands on the irreconcilable's shoulders, called for open passage through the crowd, and propelled Uncle Jordan down the narrow lane the ranks of humanity afforded.

"You prob'ly heard what was said to you just now, as you and me sa'ntered through that crowd," suggested the cap'n, when they had reached the open. "I don't need to add anything to what you know of general public sentiment, except to say that if I catch you around anywhere else to-day trying to break up a happy and brotherly party, I'll hitch the whole of the celebration fireworks to your coat tails and set you to running and ki-ying. You go home!"

Uncle Jordan's white mane and his whiskers fairly bristled with ire, and his jaws worked, but he knew danger when he saw it, and restrained himself and went away.

"I'm the only man in this town who ain't been goofered by this infernal foolishness," he shouted from a distance, halting for a bold moment. "You'll see what comes of taking a nat'ral enemy into your bosoms. Hist'ry is full of warnings. I've read it, and I know."

Uncle Trufant's little eyes seemed closer together than ever as he bored his gaze here and there into the throng.

"I ain't to persume, am I, speaking on behalf of the visiting firemen, that there's any gre't amount of that feeling hidden around in this crowd?"

"That old moss-flaked hornbeam don't represent anybody but himself," declared Hiram, with much heat. "He'd rather start a dog fight, any day, for nothing, than get paid for starting a peace movement."

"Because if there is any of that sentiment," proceeded Uncle Trufant, with the dogged and persistent testiness of old age, "it ain't too late for us to thumb our noses at this whole dad-blamed town, like we've allus done, and march home and eat our own vittles. We don't have to be beholden to nobody for nothing, and now I speak in behalf of the visiting firemen."

"We're here, calm, peaceable, and forgiving, ready for a good time with good will to all," said one of the Niagaras who were massed around their tub. "But"—and here he shook the end of the red-white-and-blue haul rope with monitory gesture—"we ain't going to stand any twits, and if this town wasn't ready to receive us right and use us white, it hadn't ought to have been so represented to us."

"Look here, I've done the representing, I've done the inviting, and now I'm doing the honors," roared Hiram. "This is my event, and I won't have this old row started all over again, all for nothing, even if I have to jump down in this crowd and cuff ears right and left."

"All we hanker to know is whether or not we're wanted here," said Uncle Trufant. "Of course, seeing all that has happened in the past, it comes perfectly nat'ral to us to think we ain't wanted. But if it can be proved to the contrary, then you find Niag'ry meeting you all halfway."

"You'll find that to be the sentiment of the visiting firemen, one and all," affirmed the other speaker.

"I'll be cussed if that ain't a fine slug for this town, and a nice position for us to be put into!" raved Hiram. "Do you fellers usually shove your watches down in your bootlegs before letting your own mothers get nigh enough to kiss you? Ain't we acting all right toward you?"

"Well, sometimes words speak louder than actions," vouchsafed the warrior, Uncle Trufant, trying to locate a challenging look in the crowd. "One man didn't waste no time in spitting out his spite—and there may be others."

"Old Lem Jordan hasn't been convinced that the Revolutionary War is over yet," declared Hiram. "What does his word amount to? I now call on a citizen whose word does amount to something. I ask Cap'n Aaron Sproul, toastmaster at our forthcoming banquet, to state the position of our noble town."

Cap'n Sproul did not hurry his reply, and a great hush fell over the throng.

"I will remark for the benefit of all in sound of my voice," he said at last, "that position of said noble town just at the present moment seems to be very close to the breakers with both anchors dragging. All concerned better use a little common sense, up with sails, and ratch her off. If you are sensible men, here, and not rowdydow schoolboys, anybody who lets out another snarl ought to be ashamed of himself. Everybody who is here for a good time and no fussing, raise hands."

A forest of arms waved in the air.

"Start your music, give three cheers for everybody, and get together," admonished the cap'n.

And then the placated throngs, while the drums beat and the fifes shrilled, melted into one conglomerate mass of merry-makers. Hiram and Uncle Trufant descended from their respective thrones and shook hands with each other. Then Hiram promptly sought out Cap'n Sproul.

A smartly dressed, youngish man trailed along with him, a stranger.

"I want you to shake hands with a friend of mine, Cap'n Sproul," he invited. "One of the boys I trained up in the circus business. And I want to say that he does me credit. Has gone me a few better since he has plunged in for himself. This is 'Diamond Lew' Britton. Show my friend, Cap'n Sproul, why the boys all call you that, Lew."

Mr. Britton removed his cigar, rolled up his lip, and disclosed a diamond set into a front tooth.

The cap'n gazed on this exhibit and on the stranger without much enthusiasm. He distrusted everybody connected with the circus business.

"Lew says he got sort of homesick to see the old man again, and so he dropped off on his way up to the Central Fair," chatted Hiram affably. "And he couldn't have picked a better day for a visit. Lew always likes to sit in where there's something doing."

"That's me—with the bells on!" agreed Mr. Britton, replacing his cigar and rolling it into a corner of his mouth.

"Never was a chap with a better idea of what makes a show, since old Noah started his menagerie on the top of Mount Ariat. He can take two feathers and a goose egg and get the peop coming."

"That's me—with the ginger—always with the ginger," Mr. Britton affirmed.

"Aaron, you have just showed that you know how to team a touchy crowd,

like this, into good nature," said his friend. "So I'm going to appoint you general manager of the day's sports, with Diamond Lew as first assistant."

"I'll be right there with the ginger jar," volunteered Mr. Britton. "You and me will have these hayseeds bumping their chins with their knees, cap."

"With you as referee, things will run as slick as soft soap on a cellar door, Aaron," said the old showman. "I'm putting up a hundred dollars for prize money—first prize in every contest is ten dollars. Now let the merry work go on."

"What is that merry work you're speaking of?" inquired the cap'n sullenly.

"Great Scott, the contests! You never heard of firemen getting together and having a good time without contests, did you? Potater race, three-legged race, hop-skip-and-jump, barrel race, greasy pole, and et cetry. Announce and clear the decks."

"This is your treat and your rink-tum," said Cap'n Sproul, "and if you feel like starting another riot, I don't suppose I can stop you. But you can bet tugboats against belaying pins that I won't be aiding and abetting." He turned to walk away.

"What in blazes do you mean?"

"I mean that the minute you go to putting up money for them red-shirted lobsters to fight for, it'll not only stir up a new hoorah, but will start over again every old row that has been fought out in the past forty years. I realize, of course, that this circus business has specked your intellect more or less, but I did give you credit for having a few brains left."

"But look-a-here, something has got to be done to entertain these guests of ours."

"Sure thing! Something with a little ginger sprinkled on," said Mr. Britton.

"As the toastmaster I've picked for our banquet, I must say you're showing



"You're rid of him easy. He ain't any addition to a gay party."

a devil of a spirit in this affair!" exploded the old showman. "Where's your interest?"

"It's in that banquet you've just spoke of," declared the cap'n. "I want to say to you that if you start them sports, there's no prospect of having a banquet unless you have it in a hors-pittle. You may think you have made over the human nature in this town and in Vienny by tying some flags on them hand tubs and having a fife-and-

drum corps play a tune. But you haven't—not by a long shot. You have just seen one symptom. And if you order them sports-to begin, I've got a good mind to order a constable to arrest you as a prime mover in disturbing the peace. I'm giving you fair warning, Hiram."

"What is your idea as to how to make a pleasing and profitable day out of this?" inquired the old showman, with sarcasm. "Give 'em tin rattles and

sugar tits and invite 'em to sit under the trees and sing penny-royal hymns?"

"I ain't in the show business, and I ain't suggesting what you'd better do. I'm telling you what you'd better not do. And if you do it after the warning I've given, I shall get out of this town behind the first hoss I can find with four legs on him—and I shall stay out till the riot is over."

"Do you mean to say that you'd slide out from under me as toastmaster after you've been advertised as such?"

"You can name it to suit yourself," said the doughty cap'n, with a decisiveness that was convincing. "You keep your party genteel, and I'll stay and do the best I can. When the first game starts, then you'll see me heading out of this town with a whalebone breeze behind the hoss. And you know I'm a man of my word."

He walked off.

"Set up the pins and tell everybody to roll," advised Mr. Britton cheerfully. "You're rid of him easy. He ain't any addition to a gay party."

But Hiram Look scratched the side of his head thoughtfully under the rim of his plug hat and gazed after the departing cap'n with much concern.

"He doesn't know ginger from sawdust," added the circus expert, giving his gray derby an extra slant over his left eye.

"Maybe not," assented Hiram, "but he's the high sheriff of the county, and has been advertised as toastmaster—and when I give a show in my home town, I cal'late to produce features as advertised."

Mr. Britton airily flicked off cigar ashes.

"I can just chew a job like that into ribbons—can eat it, boss. Toastmaster! Huh! I'll be ringmaster, and have the rubes jumping over the tables."

"That's what I'm afraid of," returned Hiram. "You ain't designed to manage indoor sports like a banquet. I need

a man with a steady hand. Cap'n Sproul has been advertised, and I've got to produce him."

"You don't mean to say you're going to buckle down in front of him and cancel attractions, do you?"

"I think there's a good deal of truth in what he says about this crowd," hedged Hiram. "You saw for yourself how near they came to busting out just because one old fool shot his mouth off. I can see all plain that Vienna and Scotaze haven't got used to being yoked together as yet. Did you ever see a pair of cattle tumble down and turn the yoke?"

"No, I've never junketed much among the jaspers."

"Well, it's bad business for the oxen. Both of 'em are liable to choke to death, son. Seeing that I'm responsible for this brotherly meeting, I'll do all I can to keep it brotherly. An old sea captain can smell bad weather a long ways off—and I guess he's got just as much of an instink for trouble. I reckon I'll let this crowd mingle and be merry without contesting for prizes. If trouble is hanging around here, waiting for an excuse, it won't catch me furnishing any excuse."

Mr. Britton stared at his mentor of the old days, opened his mouth, then shut it and strolled away.

"I guess it was better not to say it," he reflected. "I don't want to hurt his feelings. But I'll be cussed if I don't duck the hicks when it comes to spending my last days. It's no place for a circus man who wants to hold onto his buckram."

At the end of half an hour, Foreman Hiram Look was conscious that a rather depressing lethargy had taken possession of the holiday crowd in his village. He moved about, exchanging greetings, pulling little groups together, endeavoring to instill gayety and start genial conversation. But everybody seemed to be expecting something. This

mere hanging around the village square was becoming irksome. But Showman Look had planned on the sports and had devised nothing to take their place. And he did not want to explain to anybody his reasons for abandoning the games; to confess his distrust of his fellows or his subservience to Cap'n Sproul was equally impossible.

After a time, Foreman Trufant came hunting up the host. The Vienna chief's eyes were glittering with considerable malicious eagerness.

"Boys are in a little argument over standings and records, Foreman Look."

"Now, look here, this ain't no day for arguments," protested Hiram, as wary and as uncomfortable as a man sitting on a powder keg. "We're all met here to be merry and gay."

"And all are willing to be, providing there was only something to be gay over."

"There's the best banquet ever served in this county that's on the docket for six o'clock—only three hours from now. Pondering on that ought to keep any ordinary man happy and satisfied."

"We are all happy and satisfied," protested Uncle Trufant, "but we can't help talking, hanging around waiting as we are. They say the devil finds mischief for idle hands to do."

Hiram, struck by the new truth of this old apothegm, wondered whether he had adopted the right system of diplomacy.

"And, seeing that we ain't getting very far in discussion of the matter," proceeded Foreman Trufant, "the boys are feeling sort of ripe for a practical test—seeing that we've got plenty of idle time on our hands. What say, Foreman Look, if we unlimber the old tubs and have a sort of a complimentary squirt?"

"No, sir! No, sir-ee, sir! Not by a damnsight!" barked Hiram, his fears flaming. "I don't want any compliments of that sort. That's where all

the trouble between these towns started—fighting about squirts."

"Yes, but that was in the old days before we was all wrapped together in brotherly love like we be to-day," persisted Uncle Trufant.

"You start a squirt going here to-day, and that brotherly love would shrivel up quicker'n tissue paper in tophet. We ain't got well enough settled into the traces of friendship, Foreman Trufant. After we sit down at that banquet and eat together, the feeling may be better cemented. I ain't going to take any chances."

The little eyes of the Vienna man glittered with more pronounced malice.

"You don't seem to be as sure of your friendship as we are, Foreman Look. We dast to handle our'n. And you ain't giving any good reason why a nice, pleasant day like this should be wasted, when we might just as well be settling all disputes. What's the matter? Afeard you'll get licked again?"

"Niagary ain't ever licked us yet—taking the general average of squirts," proclaimed Foreman Look.

"And I say we have—and that's what my boys say to your boys, and hence the dispute that we might as well settle right here to-day."

"I shan't get into any argument—I didn't mean to say as much as I did," protested Hiram desperately. "You go amuse yourself till the banquet is dished up. Tell your boys to do the same."

"Amuse ourselves *how*?" queried Uncle Trufant. "We're too old to play marbles, roll hoops, or flirt with the girls. You wouldn't want us to go home and say that a nice day had been wasted, would you?"

"I shan't give off orders to unlimber for a squirt. It ain't seasonable or in place."

"I'd rather have a man say right out that he's scared—it leaves a better taste in the mouth," affirmed Uncle Trufant.

"But if you don't care to admit it, I donno as I can make you."

He went limping back to his men. Hiram stared after the irritating veteran with a scowl, and swore under his breath.

"If it wasn't for preserving the brotherly peace of this day and making sure of having that banquet a success," he growled, "I'd knock the blastnation bill off'm that old, squint-eyed woodpecker. I'd always rather have a man hit me between the eyes than sidle up and peck, peck, peck."

When he saw Mr. Britton a little later, that gentleman was leaning against a hitching post at one side of the village square, and he yawned obtrusively in Hiram's face.

"Makes a pretty long and tedious afternoon of it, doesn't it?" queried Diamond Lew, polishing his decorated tooth with the tip of his finger. "They'll all be so sound asleep by the time your banquet is served that you'll have to go around and wake 'em up with gongs and dinner bells. They are all remarking that it's funny, considering all the lively shows you've arranged here in the past, that you've fell down on the pet project of all. Of course, I've done the best I could for you in way of explaining."

"Explaining! Explaining—how?" inquired the old showman, with sour scowl.

"Why, I've simply been telling 'em to wait for the big show."

"You mean you've been barking for the banquet, hey?"

"Not for the vittles, boss. I'm no hot-dog orator. The vittles will talk for themselves. I've been telling your friends that they want to stick around and view one of the greatest after-dinner stunts that was ever pulled off in this section. Oh, leave it to little Lew to put you in right."

"Look here, son, I haven't asked you

to do any promising or putting in on my account."

"How about hooking me round the neck to-day, the first minute I showed my face, and begging me to grab in and help?"

"I meant managing the sports."

"Where are your sports? You let that old codfish bluff you to a standstill. Well, seeing that you asked me to grab in and then grabbed it all away from me, I'm showing that I'm your true friend by planning to save the day for you. You can't let these people stagger away home half asleep and passing the word that you gave 'em a time without one dash of pep in it."

"My programmy for after dinner is songs and music and brotherly speeches," expostulated Hiram.

Mr. Britton waved his hand in patronizing fashion.

"Boss, living in the country seems to be bad for a circus man. You've gone to seed. But there's nothing like having a live one like your friend Lew drop around in time of need. Now run right along and roll your hoop. I've got it all planned. And it's going to be a stunt that will frizzle the whiskers of these jerries. It's real ginger."

Hiram removed his plug hat and scuffed palm over perspiring brow.

"This isn't any circus—it's a polite after-dinner event you're butting in on, Britton. I'm almighty suspicious of your taste in them matters. You come across with what you're planning to do."

"It's going to be a general surprise. It has got to be one to make it work out right. You just sit tight and enjoy it."

Hiram placed heavy hand on Mr. Britton's shoulder.

"Look here! Maybe I do live in the country these days, and have slowed down more or less. But don't you get fresh with my personal business. You go ahead and issue me an advance sheet



"And I stand here and point my finger right at the whited sepulcher I mean."

on what you're planning to do, or I'll run you out of town before that banquet begins. This is Proprietor Look of Look's Leviathan Aggregation talking just now—understand?"

The old authority was in his tones and his mien.

"Well," admitted Mr. Britton regretfully, "perhaps I *have* got to take you into it to some extent. On thinking it over carefully, I see now that I've got to take you in—I was almost forgetting some of the minor details. You come to that banquet with a revolver under your coat tails on each hip—loaded with blanks. Be careful they're blanks."

"What the—who the——" stammered Hiram, the red of indignant protest coming into his cheeks. "What kind of an affair do you think a genteel and brotherly banquet in this town is?"

"It's to carry out the joke, boss."

"What do you expect me to do—make believe shoot up the visiting firemen? Is that your idea of humor?"

"Now, see here, boss, pat back your plumage—pat it down! You're a good

showman, and you know what a crowd needs. This is no parsons' convention. You can't send that crowd home doped with prunes and patter. I want you to admit—and you will if you're honest—that this affair is almighty poor as a show, up to date. Now, ain't it? Look around. See 'em all dropping their under jaws pretty nigh off with the garps."

"It ain't all I had planned to have it," admitted Hiram. "But I've got to be almighty careful that something ain't started."

"I'm only going to pull off an innocent little stunt with a loud bang and a big laugh in it," protested his circus friend. "First, all their old ears will stick up and come forward like a mule's ears at oat time. Their eyes will bug out, they'll feel a buzz all over themselves, then bing! After that the big laugh. See?"

"No, I don't. But I want to see—and see blamed sudden."

"Well, boss, if this stunt was good enough for the last banquet of the

Amalgamated Circus Aid League, it's good enough for this spinach belt. You know Lafe Weeks, of Weeks' Carnival Companies? Well, Lafe was elected president, and then 'Doc' Sparks—you know Doc, slickest torch-stand spieler this side of Wind Mountain?—well, Doc he got up and began by saying, regretfullike, that he was sorry to bring the matter up at that time and disturb a party of gents, but he felt it was due the order to be warned that the man who had been elected mustn't have the office. He had hoped he wouldn't be elected, but, seeing that he had been, he now felt it his duty and so forth and so on. The idea is, he showed up what he called Lafe's private life—worked in murder, arson, and all the rest—and then Lafe—he'd been put wise and assigned his part—talked back, and then when everybody was all wrought up, the two pulled guns and begun to shoot, and the boys all stampeded and rolled under tables and hopped out of the windows. When it was all quieted down, then the boys got the straight tip and came sneaking back—and you ought to have heard the laugh. It was a scream. Nobody hurt and all gay and lovely in the end. The boys haven't got done talking about it yet. Now do you want to send this crowd home right, or do you propose to let the occasion fizzle out into a blah?"

Mr. Britton put a showman's accent of intense scorn into that last word.

"It must have been a general howl. I'd like to have seen Lafe shooting," admitted Hiram, his showman's soul fired by the possibilities in the situation.

"It was the best thing I ever saw pulled off, boss. I've been mousing around here and asking sly questions, and I find that old Squire Reeves, of your Ancients, has a blame sharp tongue and a good command of language. He's the man to stand up and attack you right in your own home

town—a neighbor who has dug out your general record—see? That will set the visiting firemen to guessing first slap. Then you come back—and then the gun work. Fine! Everybody taking to cover."

Hiram scratched his head and pondered.

"I don't see no harm that can come out of it," he admitted. "We'll be keeping it right in the family, so to speak—the visiting firemen simply listening."

"And your men sitting on the side lines with mouths open, wondering what it's all about, boss."

"There comes the hitch," affirmed Hiram. "I'm so popular with the Ancients, and old Reeves' tongue is so generally hated in this town, that my men will rise up and kill him before he gets a dozen words out of him. It's unfortunate that I'm so popular. They won't let the joke wiggle along—they'll get up and jump on it like they were killing a snake. There's only one thing to be done: I'll call a special meeting of the Ancients behind closed doors, put 'em wise, and let 'em get the full richness of it by watching the visiting firemen."

"Slush!" remonstrated Mr. Britton. "Somebody will leak."

"I reckon you don't know the loyalty of my Ancients when I give off orders. And I guess you don't realize how popular I am. It has got to be done the way I say or else they'll never let it be put through. And where half the crowd is fooled and t'other half is wise all the time, the laugh is going to be twice as big. I don't want to keep a good thing away from my Ancients, son. This looks like a good thing. We'll hitch up and work it."

"I ain't in any way favoring your taking your bunch into the inside of the thing the way you are," said Mr. Britton. "It wouldn't be my way of working it. If the cogs slip, don't blame

me. But go ahead that way, if you're bound to. However, if you're going to put wise that old hunk of hard-tack you call Sproul, you can count me out. I take the first train."

"You needn't fret; he won't be tipped off," declared Hiram. "I ain't taking in no man with the kind of a sense of humor he's got. Furthermore, I'm looking forward to extracting a little personal and private fun from watching Cap'n Sproul's face when that thing breaks. I want to tell you, son, that the more I think over your scheme, the better it looks to me."

"Oh, we ain't standing still these days in the show business, even if you have retired to the bush," retorted the airy Mr. Britton. "Ginger is my motto. Your show hasn't been much up to date, but we'll make the finale a knock-out—and send 'em home happy. And now let's get busy."

Cap'n Sproul met them several times that afternoon. Their sudden activity puzzled him. The manner in which they seemed to be wrapped up in each other and their affairs disturbed him.

"I never knew circus fellers to get their heads together without something coming from it that ain't laid down in a Sunday-school program," he pondered. "There's one thing, however, that I'm thankful for. I'll have charge of the quarter-deck when that banquet is going on, and I propose to steer the ship so that she won't gybe in a squall or hit any shoals."

Therefore he merely scowled when they grinned at him in a way he could not understand.

When at last the hour for the banquet arrived, the Ancients and their guests, the Niagaras, were still mingling amicably, though listlessly, and he felt, with much relief, that the crisis of the touchy affair had safely passed.

And when he gazed complacently down the lines of jaws that were wagging above the long tables in town hall,

he felt an even more comfortable sense of security. How could ancient rancor survive a feast like that, or fresh enmities develop in the odors and steams from that board?

There were "vittles for men," not dishes for dalliers. Heaped bowls of yellow-eyed beans, which had been baked for twenty-four hours in pits in the ground, were flanked by upright cylinders of brown bread, of the height and circumference of Foreman Look's plug hat. Plenty of pork, with crispy, brown rind and fat of succulent whiteness. Hot roast beef all dripping with brown gravy. Cream-of-tartar biscuits in heaps and windrows. Doughnuts, molasses-and-sugar-dusted. Great mugs of coffee, and all sorts of cakes and cookies. And Hiram Look beamed bountifully through the moist haze that arose from the viands, and exhorted all to "pitch in and eat hearty."

When the last of the feasters had finished and all the plates had been cleaned slickly with the twirl of biscuit crusts—for the Ancients and their guests were too appreciative and too thirsty to send "orts" away from the table—Hiram Look arose and greeted the guests, and Uncle Brad Trufant responded with feeling. Hiram's voice was like a bassoon; Uncle Trufant's like a fife.

Then Foreman Look introduced Cap'n Aaron Sproul as toastmaster of the occasion, making several happy references to his ability as boss of any quarter-deck he chose to tread, and the cap'n arose to meet great applause.

"I'm no speechmaker, gents," he said, "and I shall stay right here on the quarter-deck and send a crew into the rigging to loose tacks and sheets in the talking line. I simply want to say to you that you're showing what can be done when men use common sense in regard to matters between themselves."

He raised impressive forefinger.

"There wouldn't be nigh as many

wars in this world if men would stop twitting each other about what they have done in the past or what is going to be done in the future. If kings and emperors and their first mates would get together and sit down and eat plenty of good, old-fashioned grub like this and talk the whole thing over, soave and sociable, there'd be dull times in the powder business. Now, I ain't going to take up more of your time, because we have with us to-night many good speakers. And first of 'em——"

"Why not have Squire Reeves dig into the thing right now?" hissed Mr. Britton in Hiram's ear. "The whole thing will be more sociable after the big laugh. They've all et so much that they're a little dopy—you can see it."

"It's a good idea to wake 'em up at the start-off," assented Hiram.

"Whisper to Reeves, and have him bust right in on the first speaker," admonished the ginger dispenser.

Toastmaster Sproul had decided to put a good foot forward at the start. He introduced the Methodist minister.

"I cannot better preface my few remarks," said the reverend gentleman, gazing down the ranks of resigned and rather apathetic faces, "than by saying that it is sweet where brothers are gathered together in unity. I shall take a little time for the discussion of unity, for the world has been——"

"There can't be unity here or anywhere else when it is built on a whited sepulcher," broke in a harsh voice.

The minister halted in amazed trepidation, and all eyes turned to the source of this interruption. They saw Squire Alcander Reeves slowly unfold his tall and angular form and rise. His lantern-jawed, saturnine face was ominous. His mien promised so much that even Cap'n Sproul waited to learn what this performance meant.

"I'm sorry to have to stand up here at this time and in this place and say what I've got to say," rasped Squire

Reeves. "I'm sorry to break in on a parson. But there is a right time for everything, and the right time for my talk is now, before this party of gentlemen is fooled any further into paying honor in a place where they are going to be shamed for doing it. And I stand here and point my finger right at the whited sepulcher I mean."

He jabbed a bony finger in the direction of Hiram Look, and stood there, aiming that accusatory digit, a veritable skeleton at the feast.

"Look here!" shouted Mr. Britton, eager to fan the affair. "I'm a stranger here in this place, but I want to say this is no time to yap out any private grudges. I'm a friend of Colonel Look's and——"

"If you know him well, then you know he's a man to be despised instead of honored," declared the squire, his angry tones rising above a mingled gasp and groan. "You have been associated with him, have you?"

Mr. Britton nodded, showing some confusion.

"Then you know that he has been a scoundrel and a renegade, and you don't dare to stand up and deny it. I dare you to stand up and say that he hasn't lied and cheated, forged and robbed, to get the money that he has been lavishing around this town."

Mr. Britten bowed his head into his hands in mute token of inability to further defend the rascal whose sins had found him out.

"I say this is the time to bring this thing to a crisis," roared the squire. "He has coaxed honest men here to eat food that he bought with his stolen money. It's a wonder that the food hasn't choked all of us. He has known that vengeance was overtaking him, and he has been trying to buy us. But I speak here and now because I want the word to go forth to all parts of this county that Hiram Look is a——"

Uncle Brad Trufant leaped up on

a chair, and his shrill tones cut across the squire's speech as a knife cuts cheese.

"What are you doing there, you Ancients and Honnubbles, setting like tabbies on a sof' cushion, blinking and letting an old snap turtle attack your honored foreman?"

His blazing eyes swept their ranks.

The Ancients, forewarned, anticipatory, and already tasting the flavor of the joke with gusto, seemed to be displaying a most astonishing lack of resentment. A few of them who had much sense of humor and little self-control were hiding grins behind their palms.

Cap'n Sproul struggled up, still dizzy with astonishment, and rapped on the table with the handle of his knife.

"Sit down, Trufant! You're only a Vienna outsider. This is our own family matter," rasped the squire.

"And a cussed nice fambly you seem to be," raged the other. "That's the trouble in some famblies—they'll turn to and eat each other up. We won't stand for another word being said—and I now speak for the visiting firemen."

"I want all this nonsense stopped!" shouted Cap'n Sproul.

"It's not nonsense to show up a rascal who has bamboozled honest men into associating with him and has laughed in his sleeve," insisted Squire Reeves. "I blush to name the things he has done, but behind him are trusting women and——"

"If you Ancients ain't got enough gizzard to stop this slandering of your chief, the visiting firemen will turn to and do it for you," squealed Foreman Trufant, and his men began to push back their chairs.

"Hold on! Hold on, gents!" expostulated Foreman Look. "Let's hear what this old liar has to say."

"Don't you dare to call me a liar—that's a fighting word," declared Squire

Reeves, putting his hand under his coat tail.

"We're guests full of your good grub, and we won't listen to slanderers," insisted Uncle Trufant. "We call on your Ancients to land on him."

"My men are all right—they'll stand by me," explained Hiram.

"Then it's time for 'em to be up and doing."

"They'll act when I call on 'em."

"Let 'em act right now, the way my Niagarys would act if anybody so much as stuck a tongue out at me. I demand to have 'em act."

But this precipitancy was extensively disarranging Hiram's schedule. The projected joke was reacting too swiftly. This sudden belligerency was blocking the way to that gun-play climax.

"I can always depend on my men," he insisted.

"No, you can't, either. I know you've always stood up for 'em and lied for 'em. That's good loyalty in a foreman. But there ain't no sand in your Ancients, and there never has been—and I dare to stand right here and say so, now when they're grinning while you're being mallywhacked by an' old pirate right in your old home town."

"We don't stand for that kind of talk," bawled an Ancient.

"Then keep your sitting and take it—you seem bound to keep your sitting," retorted Uncle Trufant.

"I want order preserved in this banquet hall," commanded Toastmaster Sproul. "I call on the constables to preserve it."

"As a constable, I'll arrest the next Vienny man who sasses us," declared one of the Ancients doughtily.

"Come on, then," invited Uncle Trufant. "Boys," he squealed, turning to his valiants, "if Hecly ain't got spirit enough to protect its foreman, we'll turn to and do it for 'em. Lug that old hot brimstone nozzle out of the hall," he ordered, pointing to Squire Reeves.



"There's a train leaves here about this time," Foreman Look informed Mr. Britton, with much stiffness of demeanor.

"This is a h——l of a joke!" panted the squire, getting behind Foreman Look. "Tell your crowd to keep those infernal fools off'm me."

And at that appeal, in order to protect an innocent collaborator, Hiram was obliged to order his forces to meet the onrush.

The Niagaras were filled with the noble impulse to resent wrong done to a bountiful host—the Heclas resented the fact that bullheadedness was spoiling a good joke. But it was not a Homeric battle. The combatants were elderly men, soggy with food, and they merely clawed at each other and slapped with the flats of their palms.

Finally Hiram and his cursing lieutenant, Mr. Britton, managed to force the chief fighters apart and make them understand that an explanation was ready. Foreman Look made it testily, and dwelt upon the fact that if the Niagaras had only waited a few minutes, the thing would have been brought around all right.

"So that was the idee, hey?" queried Uncle Trufant, breaking on the hush that followed the explanation.

"That was the plan," put in Mr. Britton, "and it would have been a scream. I've seen it done before. But circus men have some brains."

"You expected to begin shooting at each other and have us guests rolling under the tables and jumping out of the windows, hey?"

"Sure thing! It was a riot the way it was done by the circus league."

"Then you expected us to come sneaking back and laugh hearty, hey?"

"How could you have helped laughing?"

Foreman Trufant looked him up and down, looked at the members of the Niagara Company, looked back at Mr. Britton, and merely remarked, "Huh!"

But he put a whole speech of resentment, protest, and disgust into that monosyllable. And one by one the members of the Niagara Intrepid Veteran Company echoed that grunt.

Then Foreman Trufant started for the door, kicking pieces of broken crockery out of his path. His men followed him silently, also kicking at broken crockery.

Uncle Trufant turned and delivered this final remark from the threshold of Scotaze's town hall, sour sarcasm in his tones:

"It has allus been bad enough 'twixt us and you—but this is the first time we've ever been coaxed over here to be used just to start a laugh. I reckon the only safe plan to be observed between Scotaze and Vienny after this is to fortify the town line and stop all passing betwixt and between. Owing to our difference of opinion about what's humorous, we might get to killing each other, trying to make things gay and lively."

Cap'n Aaron Sproul trudged out of the hall, displaying a countenance that did not invite any of the amenities of good-night salutations.

"There's a train leaves here about this time," Foreman Look informed Mr.

Britton, with much stiffness of demeanor.

"That's all right, boss. I'm on! And I'm off, too. I guess the show business, as we're running it these days, is a little too swift for your community. I gave that convention of crabs a ginger cocktail—when all they could stand was hayseed tea. Good night!"

"Reckon this finishes us and Vienny forever," stated one of the Ancients regretfully. "And they was planning on giving us a return banquet!"

"There's no good trying to keep up genial sociability with anybody who can't take a joke," affirmed Mr. Look.

But in his heart he felt that civilization, as represented by society in his section of the country, had been set back at least fifty years by that fresh declaration of war between the Niagaras and the Heclas.



To a Butterfly on Broadway

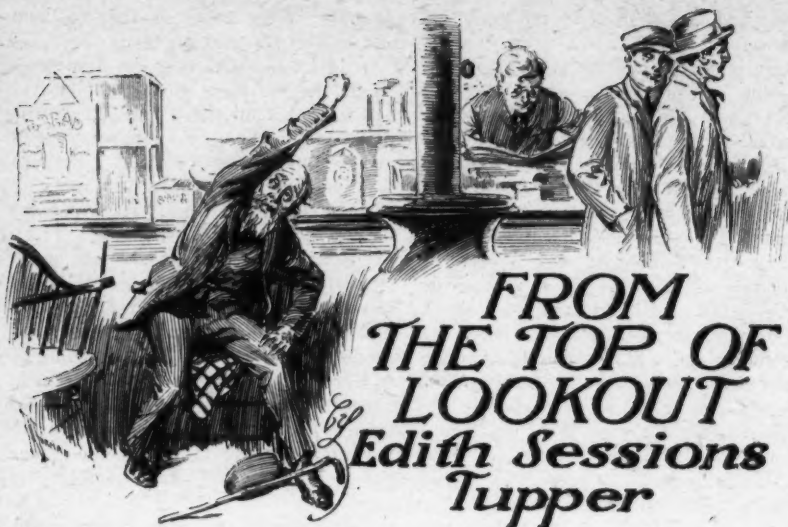
CHILD of the fair green fields, what wind of fate
Has brought you here to soil your spangled wings—
To taste the bitter joy that knowledge brings—
To wonder and to learn, perhaps too late?

Oh, may some kindlier wind than sped your flight
From flowered meadowland or grassy shore
Bear you unharmed to nature's world once more,
Your spirit merry and your wings still bright.

With heart unyielding as this granite wall
To which you cling, the town pursues its way;
Holds out to foolish butterflies astray
No helping hand, and tramples those who fall.

Up, little butterfly, and hasten, then,
Far from these sordid streets. I fear the morn
May find you crawling in their reek, a torn
And broken thing, that will not fly again.

RALPH LINN.



FROM THE TOP OF LOOKOUT *Edith Sessions Tupper*

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

FROM the top of Lookout Mountain ye kin see four States," announced Uncle Steve, as he industriously pumped a pail of water for dinner.

"Oh, drat Lookout Mountain!" came a snappish voice from the kitchen. "There you go into one of them trances ag'in. Here I be slavin' in this hot kitchen an' waitin' this half hour for you to pump water, so I can git the potatoes on. I'm just sick of Lookout Mountain an' Gettysburg an' Cold Harbor an' all the rest of the crowd. I'll tell you that, Steve Dean."

Uncle Steve tiptoed into the kitchen and set the pail of water very carefully in its accustomed place on the table.

"I wouldn't say that if I was you, Mirandy," he said mildly. "Them's places that are mighty dear to me." He took off his cap humbly and wiped the moisture from his brow, as he looked at his irate spouse with mild, anxious eyes. "Ef ye could 'a' seen our boys a-chargin' up Lookout, fightin' every

inch o' the way—droppin' down, dyin' in their tracks—mebbe ye'd 'a' felt different from what ye do."

"No, I wouldn't," retorted Mrs. Dean, filling her kettle from the pail. "The war's over a good many years. Why can't ye fergit it an' talk like a sensible bein' 'bout what's goin' on to-day?"

"Fergit it?" repeated Uncle Steve, as if amazed. "Fergit it? Fergit the war, Mirandy? Why, how could I? I—I"—he paused irresolutely—"I might just as well try to fergit you—or—or—little Sally."

"Oh, you'd fergit us easy enough," flashed his wife, tossing her head. "As long as you could set an' talk about the battles of the war, you'd be perfectly satisfied. Come now, get along out o' here. I've got to get something to eat, an' I can't have you around under my feet."

Thus abjured, Uncle Steve betook himself to a wooden bench outside the kitchen door, and sat down to enjoy the

view and lose himself in the mazes of memory.

Uncle Steve was the last old soldier of the village. Year after year the ranks had thinned, until the veterans had all departed, save himself. He was a man of over seventy, but still sinewy and lithe. He could do his day's work yet, at haying or gardening. It was nothing for him to climb a tree and lop off decayed limbs, or split a cord of wood or sit up with the sick or drive miles. His gentle old face was as hard as a nut; there was not a shred of flabbiness about his gnarled hands. He came of a long line of farming ancestors, men who had lived close to the soil—frugal, temperate lives, which told now in him, their last descendant.

"Uncle Steve," as every one in the village called him, lived entirely in the past. The Civil War had been the greatest event of his life. He never wearied of rehearsing the details of the fighting, the marching, and the bivouacking. The modern age, with all its miracles—the age of steel and electricity—held no interest for him. He listened with calm contempt to apprehensions of battles in the sky.

"Them flyin' machines are well enough for rich folks to ride in, same's ottermobiles," he condescended. "But shucks! Put one alongside a battery, an' what kind of a show would it make? Just tell me that, will you? That's just fool talk, I call it, plain fool talk. Give me a ten-pound cannon every time for field work, an' I don't want no combustible slammed down from on high."

Uncle Steve had been married three times. After he had buried gentle Amelia Ann, he had wedded Lucy Jane; and after he had laid that kindly lady away, he had married Miranda, a human pepper pot. She scolded and stormed and drove her husband until the mild old fellow scarce dared call his soul his own. But one thing she could never take from him—the

memory of the past. In that he lived and moved and had his being.

"All my wives were good women"—Uncle Steve always spoke as if he had Mormon proclivities—"but they was different somehow. Amelia, she helped me on with my sword when I went to war, an' she was a-waitin' at the gate for me when I come back. Kinder proud o' her soldier, she said. Then, after I married Lucy, she sot great store by hearin' 'bout the war. We used to set winter evenin's by the fire, an' I'd tell it all over to her. She seemed kinder tickled over me bein' on hand, as it were. But Mirandy!" Here Uncle Steve would pause and shake his head mournfully. "Mirandy don't seem to hanker none after the war. She ruther go a-visitin' or to prayer meetin', it seems."

Being denied an appreciative audience at home, Uncle Steve sought one elsewhere. For some time he held the corner grocery spellbound. Then, after a little, the habitués of that resort yawned in his face, or made excuses and left the circle one by one, until it came about that often in the midst of the charge at Cold Harbor, Uncle Steve would suddenly realize that his only audience was the cracker barrel. Then he would rise and shamefacedly slouch off to his taunting wife.

But at last there came a renaissance of interest in his experiences that warmed the old soldier's heart. For years the stately old Loomis mansion had been closed. The family were all dead save one married daughter, who lived miles away. One year she came back with her husband, and opened up the great old-fashioned house, and it was soon known that she intended to live there permanently.

Uncle Steve had known Emily Lawrence's father, Judge Loomis, well, and he promptly called. He was treated with the utmost courtesy, and made to feel quite at home. Thereafter, he



"From the top of Lookout Mountain ye kin see four States," announced Uncle Steve.

fought his battles over at the Loomis mansion.

The family encouraged him in his harmless enjoyment. Summer evenings, Uncle Steve would go to the village post office, ostensibly for mail, although he was never known to receive a letter. In reality, he wished to stop at the Lawrence home, to live over "the dangers he had seen" for the benefit of his new-found friends.

This was a great vexation to Mrs. Dean.

"What do you suppose them stuck-

up folks care about an old fool like you?" she angrily demanded, when she discovered her husband's visits to the great house.

"Mirandy, they don't treat me as if they thought I was an old fool," he pleaded. "They treat me with great respect, an' ask questions as if they wanted to hear more."

"Huh!" sneered his wife. "I'll bet they laugh at you behind your back!"

"Seems like you don't want me to enjoy nothin'," replied Uncle Steve.

"If you'd enjoy religion, I'd be bet-

ter pleased than to have you runnin' round talkin' forever an' a day 'bout them old battles," Mrs. Dean responded. "'Tain't no ways Christian to be always thinkin' of fightin'."

"It's 'bout the only comfort I have, ma," returned the old man humbly.

It was a great day for Uncle Steve when he went to the Gettysburg reunion. He had long been anticipating this trip, and, when he returned, he was aglow with excitement. His eyes shone with unwonted fires, and his shoulders had lost their pathetic sag. Once more he carried himself like a soldier. Once more he compelled the attention of the corner grocery while he narrated his experiences. And once more the Lawrences were his eager auditors.

"Yes, I seen it all again," he said, at their first interview; "Round Top, Devil's Den, Cemetery Ridge, Culp's Hill, the peach orchards, an' the fields of wheat. I seen lots of my old comrades an' lots of the men I fit against. We was all brothers down there to Gettysburg—North an' South mingled in together. We ate an' drank an' swapped lies with each other. Them monuments is a noble sight—some of 'em awful grand an' high. Shouldn't wonder if some on 'em was 'most fifty foot. An' I kep' a-thinkin' of how it looked when I saw it before, an' I declare I could almost see Meade an' Sickles a-settin' on their blooded horses, an' that handsome Southerner, Pickett, a-leadin' his dare-devil charge, an' Farnsworth, killed on horseback, his saber raised up in the air. My, my, but there was an awful lot of ghosts on that battlefield! I lived it all over, ma'am. You see, here's Round Top an' here's Little Round Top. Just here is Cemetery Ridge, an' here was the Snyder Farm. On Round Top was a hill, 'bout one hundred foot high, all fenced round with big boulders. An' just here was

the lane from Emmetsburg Pike to the left——"

A rap on the door interrupted him. Mrs. Dean stood there, red and scornful.

"If you're through botherin' these folks with your silly talk, mebbe you'll come home an' split some kindlin'," she said.

"Yes, ma," patiently replied the old soldier.

He picked up his cap and walked slowly to the door. His shoulders drooped again in the old pitiful fashion, and his eyes, but now ablaze with martial memories, grew dim and lusterless. He paused uncertainly at the door.

"Mebbe you'd like to have me tell you more," he ventured, "after I git my chores done?"

His friends assured him that they would look forward to his return, and the poor, cowed old man followed his angry wife as she flounced disdainfully down the street.

Soon after, conditions compelled Emily Lawrence to leave the sleepy little town where she had met and loved this quaint old man. He came to say good-by to her the morning of her departure.

"I wish ye all good luck," he said wistfully, as they shook hands. "I dunno what I'll do now. They're tired of Gettysburg down to the grocery, an' you-all are goin' away, an' Mirandy won't hear no word 'bout it, an' I haven't got nobody to talk over war times with. I feel sort o' lonesome, ma'am." He lifted his eyes, giving her a sad little smile, but it was a forlorn attempt at gayety.

She cheered him as best she could, telling him that she would come earlier next year.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said. "I'll get here for Memorial Day, and you and I'll decorate your comrades' graves together. Wouldn't that please you?"

This appealed to him, and he brightened up at once. As his friends drove away from the Lawrence home, they left him standing at attention, his hand to his old slouch hat with its tarnished tinsel cord and tassels, set at a military angle over one ear, bravely smiling, but with tears in his eyes.

That was a hard year for Uncle Steve. He missed his friends, their open door, the cheery blaze of their fire, the glow of their lamps, and the consideration they had always shown him. He dreaded to pass the old house with its barred shutters.

"It looks so lonesome," he muttered to himself, glancing sadly at the place each time he went by to the post office. A severe cold brought on pneumonia, and after he had weathered a dangerous illness, Uncle Steve was never quite the same. His manner grew uncertain, and he rambled in his speech. As spring came on, he began wandering off alone into the country. He would climb a lofty hill and stand for hours looking off over the landscape, muttering incoherently to himself of the old war days.

He ceased attending the village church, much to the scandal of its members and the parson, a cut-and-dried, fussy, important little man. Meeting Uncle Steve on the street one day, the pastor took him to task.

"We never see you at church any more, brother," he said. "How is that?"

"Elder," returned Uncle Steve, drawing himself up stiffly, "from the top of your pulpit ye kin see almost to the front door of the meetin'house. From the top of Lookout, I kin see the kingdoms of the world an' the glory thereof. Why should I waste my time goin' to church? I'm a-lookin', sir, fer the boys."

He was restless now, always trudging back and forth as fast as his waning strength would allow.

"What's your hurry, Uncle Steve?"

called a neighbor, meeting him one day as he pegged along the village street, his eyes, steadfastly fixed, looking far away. "Where ye goin' so fast?"

"Forced march," he muttered. "Ordered to make Brown's Ferry by night-fall. Got to join Hooker's brigade there. There's hot work ahead!"

Toward the last of May, Emily Lawrence returned to her father's old home. The great house was thrown open, the windows unbarred. An air of cheerful activity once more pervaded the old mansion. Fires were lighted, and when the blaze leaped on the old-fashioned living-room hearth, Mrs. Lawrence at once thought of the patient, drooping old figure that had sat so many times at her fireside.

"I wonder Uncle Steve hasn't been in to welcome us," she said to the members of the family. "I hope the dear old man isn't ill. I believe I'll go over to his house and find out why he hasn't called."

To think was to act with Emily Lawrence. She picked her way across the damp meadows to the little humble frame cottage at the crossroads, and knocked at Uncle Steve's door. Mrs. Dean opened it and gave her a grudging nod.

"Is Uncle Steve here?" Mrs. Lawrence asked.

"Here?" Mrs. Dean snapped. "He's never here. He's as crazy as a loon, an' trampin' all over the country. I've got my hands full, I can tell you!"

"Have you no idea where he is?" Mrs. Lawrence persisted, undaunted by Mrs. Dean's wrathful demeanor.

"He said this morning he was goin' to the cemetery," she replied. "Said he had to meet some of the boys at their graves. Oh, he's clean daffy! I'm thinkin' of puttin' him in the county asylum."

"Mrs. Dean!" Mrs. Lawrence cried in horror. "You wouldn't—you couldn't do that!"



They left him standing at attention, his hand to his old slouch hat, bravely smiling, but with tears in his eyes.

"I don't know why," she tartly rejoined. "I'm all wore out, I tell ye, takin' care of him an' workin' like a slave."

But Mrs. Lawrence fled from the torrent of complaint, and, hastening on up the street, soon climbed the hill to the village cemetery.

"I must find him—find him quickly—my poor old friend! He shall never go to an insane asylum," she said, as she forged up the long hill, "if I have to take him away and care for him myself. That woman! How can she be so cruel?"

The cemetery was in a thick pine grove on the brow of a hill that overlooked a wide expanse of valley. The pine needles carpeted the ground so deeply that her tread was noiseless; therefore she was able to approach the slight, bent figure she saw in the dis-

tance without making any warning sound. Uncle Steve stood at the headstone of one of his old comrades, his stick held like a rifle over his shoulder. He was on guard.

As Mrs. Lawrence came nearer, he suddenly dropped the staff and in a loud voice called: "Jim Strong, private."

In the solemn stillness only the sighing of the wind through the pines was heard.

"Dead in the wheat fields at Gettysburg!" his voice rang out.

A moment's pause, and then: "Ben Sanderson, private."

Another silence. "Killed in the trenches at Cold Harbor."

Slowly Uncle Steve passed from grave to grave, calling the roll of the dead. As the last name was called, he took up his station on a little central plot, removed his hat, and, turning first

to one side and then to the other, spoke to an invisible audience.

"Boys," he said, "this is my last talk with ye. I've come here many a day to talk over old times, because"—he paused and something clicked in his throat—"because I haven't had nobody else to talk to. They was tired o' hearin' the old man talk 'bout the war—they'd ruther talk 'bout ottermobiles an' flyin' machines an' politics. The war is forgot, an' the boys are forgot, 'cept on one day in the year. But I haven't never forgot it—nor you—neither."

Again he paused. The breeze lifted the sparse hairs from his seamed forehead. His old coat flapped idly about his shrunken form. He seemed lost for a moment; then, recovering himself, he went on:

"I'm a-goin' into my last engagement, boys, an' somethin' tells me I won't come out. I'm the last one—there won't be nobody left to call the roll next year. But I felt that before I heard the bugle sound 'Forward!' I must have one more talk with ye."

Again he paused for a moment; then, as if summoning all his forces for the last outburst, he cried aloud: "Can't you see it all, boys? There's Missionary Ridge to the east an' Lookout, two thousand two hundred feet above tide-water, towerin' up above our heads. See the fortifications up there—an' the rifle pits—all along the sides, halfway up, an' the bravest men in the South—our brothers—a-guardin' 'em. We've got to git up there, some way. Fightin' Joe's got across the river. Uncle Billy's at Missionary Ridge, an'

Howard's a-chargin' the mountain. Up, up now, boys, up through the mist an' the drizzlin' rain, fightin' like devils, dyin' like men, up, up to the clouds—to the clouds, boys! We've gained the hill—the top—Lookout Point——"

He fell exhausted on the ground, one arm flung over his head, lying inert, worn out, his eyes closed.

Mrs. Lawrence ran to him and, falling on her knees beside him, took his head on her arm. He stirred feebly, and, opening his eyes, looked strangely at her.

"Uncle Steve," she murmured, "it's your friend, Emily Lawrence. I've come, as I promised, to help you decorate your friends' graves. Don't you remember?"

He smiled—and something beautiful and exalted swept across the tired old face.

"Ye didn't—fergit—then?" he whispered brokenly.

"No, Uncle Steve."

"I'm glad of it. Ye always liked to hear 'bout the war—didn't ye?"

"Yes, dear friend!"

"Could ye raise me up—jest a little?" and she lifted him as high as her strength permitted. He turned his glazing eyes toward the valley below. "It's sunset—now——" he whispered. "The—battle—above the clouds—is over—the mist is gone——" Then, suddenly, with one last supreme effort, he cried in a loud voice: "Boys—from the top of Lookout Mountain—ye kin see—the Promised Land!"

His head fell back, and she laid him gently down upon the grass.



The Man Who Came Back

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Fleshpots of Egypt," "Gotrelly's First Capture," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.*

Barbara Wynn, a young American heiress, enters the library of the summer home, Twisted Trees, one September afternoon, to find her stepfather and guardian, Mr. Wynn, in a violent quarrel with her fiancé, Count Antonio Vitelli. Mr. Wynn is insisting that the engagement be broken; he will not tell why. This is all the stranger in view of the fact that it was he who practically forced Barbara into the affair. The count leaves in a threatening mood. Barbara learns from one of the servants of the arrival, earlier in the day, of a strange man, who was overheard speaking in a tone of authority to Mr. Wynn. The next morning the count is found dead beneath Barbara's window. The pistol with which he was shot has disappeared. During the publicity that follows, it is discovered that the dead man was not a count, but merely a former employee of the Vitelli family, Luigi Cardoni, masquerading under the title. Tommy Royle, an old suitor of Barbara's, comes to be of what assistance he can during the inquest. She also meets the stranger whose arrival she vaguely connects with her broken engagement. He is introduced as James Delaney, a former ward of Mr. Wynn's, who mysteriously disappeared twelve years before, just as he was about to enter upon his inheritance, and has never been heard of until this sudden reappearance. Barbara is half attracted, half repelled by him; Mr. Wynn seems to dislike him. At the inquest, which reveals nothing of importance, one of the housemaids, Felicity, a young Frenchwoman, recently married to Carl Borkvist, the gardener, fails to appear. A note to her husband is found, in which she announces that she has left him—he will know why. Carl gives no explanation except that she was jealous. Several days later Barbara finds Carl in the chrysanthemum house, dead, with an empty bottle of carbolic acid beside him. This second shock prostrates her completely. As soon as she is able to travel, she and her friend, Madeline Royle, are taken on a cruise by her guardian, who has become strangely nervous and irritable. At Kingston, during an expedition ashore, Barbara encounters Felicity Borkvist, but the maid coolly denies her own identity. At Kingston, too, James Delaney attempts to join the party, but Mr. Wynn, in a fit of drunkenness—real or assumed—refuses to let him board the yacht. Delaney is waiting for them, however, upon their return home, and at once begins a bold wooing of Barbara, who is fascinated by him, in spite of the uneasiness aroused in her by his evident power over her guardian. On one of their rides together they pass a wild-West show, and Barbara notices that one of the Indians recognizes Delaney.

CHAPTER VI.

IN three minutes I was back in Mr. Wynn's study. It was a dignified, scholarly room, reflecting him rather more truthfully, I thought, than the bleak little office in which he transacted his business at Twisted Trees. This room was commodious, richly and darkly furnished with dull rugs, with Spanish leather, with mahogany that did not glisten, and with leather-bound books that did. A portrait of my mother hung above the fireplace. She looked immature to me, for all the ex-

perience of life she had had when it was painted—immature, but very lovable, with eager, shining eyes, and soft, uncertain dimples. I looked toward it as I entered the room. Beneath it, on the mantelshef, stood, in a low vase of yellowish marble, a great pot of lilies of the valley. It was papa's one sentiment to keep growing flowers before the picture of his young wife.

He pushed forward a chair for me, and I sat down, stretching my slipped feet out to the brass fender. The logs upon the hearth had burned down to

*The first installment of this story appeared in the April number of SMITH'S.

gray ash with only a spark in them. I shivered a little, rather in anticipation of what I was to hear than from cold. My stepfather, always attentive, noticed the shiver and went to find me a scarf in the hall outside. It occurred to me that he was deferring what he had to say till the last moment. When he had laid the wrap across my shoulders, he placed a stick or two upon the fire, and then, sitting opposite to me, looked at me and sighed.

"You are not like your mother, Barbara," he said to me irrelevantly. "You're very like your father. She was more placid, more content to await events; he was rather given to forcing them, I think; to—to snatching at life. Poor boy! But he was a charming fellow—a very charming fellow!" He seemed to drift off into a reverie.

"Yes?" I uttered the monosyllable softly, to avoid the effect of impatience; nevertheless, I was nearly bursting with that emotion. Surely papa had not called me into his study merely to hear him drop into one of his infrequent reminiscences about my mother! The monosyllable recalled him from his trance of recollection. He came back to the present with a certain abruptness.

"Barbara, my dear," he said, "I hope you will not be shocked to have me mention the subject of marriage to you again. I hope you will not think I am lacking in delicacy or in regard for your feelings. It is a short time, of course, since you were the victim of ——" He hesitated and struggled to find the appropriate word; apparently it eluded him, for what he finally said was: "Since the count died. But even if you had been his wife instead of merely his fiancée, and even if he had been worthy of your sorrow, that could not be expected to last forever. In some respects, I have been glad to see that you seem to be recovering from the shock."

"Yes," I murmured, "I think I have

quite recovered from the shock—that is, as much as one can ever recover from that sort of thing. I don't suppose that life ever looks quite the same after one has been through a violent tragedy of that sort."

"I suppose not," he agreed. "Well, then, you will not think me brutal for speaking to you again of marriage?"

"Who wants to marry me?" I demanded.

I was getting rather tired of the circumlocutions in my stepfather's address. But when I spoke, it seemed to me that his silent face grew very white. He did not speak for a perceptible moment. Then he answered, as I had been sure that he would answer:

"James Delaney."

It was what I had awaited since the moment papa had called me into the study, but it filled me with a sort of horror. How had the man so soon expressed his will upon my guardian? It must have been he whom I had glimpsed in the hall that afternoon; he had lost no time, apparently, between his boast to me and his command to Mr. Wynn.

"And do you," I asked, as quietly as I could, "approve Mr. Delaney's suit?"

This time it was a dull flush that mounted his face. He did not meet my eyes; he fixed his gaze upon the brightening fire on the hearth. Finally he spoke.

"I would not withhold my consent if your wishes are the same as his," he said stiltedly. "I can't pretend that the match is one I should have made myself."

"And has Mr. Delaney implied," I demanded, with a sudden accession of energy, "that my wishes are the same as his?"

"He has implied that your feelings are, although he accuses you of a certain amount of feminine coquetry," said my stepfather.

"Will you please tell me exactly what you mean by that?" I asked angrily.

"I mean, to put it as plainly as Delaney himself put it, that he supposes you in love with him. He says, to be quite frank, that you are as greatly drawn to him as he to you—I think he says that you are made for each other! And I must say, Barbara, that your behavior gives some ground for the claim. Tell me, my dear, are you interested in the man?"

"Of course I'm interested in him!" I snapped. "Here's a man dropped down out of the skies apparently, enveloped with all sorts of mysteries. I'd be an extremely apathetic sort of girl if I weren't interested in him. But as for being in love with him—" I hesitated. Then I went on firmly: "I'm not in love with him, and I haven't the slightest intention in the world of marrying him. I told him so this afternoon, and if he has been to you since then about the matter, I consider that he has been very impertinent."

The relief in Mr. Wynn's face was perfectly plain. His muscles seemed to relax from some strain; he leaned back against the leather cushions of his chair. He sighed.

"Diffidence is certainly not one of his qualities," he admitted. "I suppose it was rather a daring performance for him to come to me with a proposal for you immediately after you had refused him. But, you see, he doesn't take your refusal seriously."

"I mean it seriously," I replied. Then, as he made no answer to this, I cried: "Papa, you don't want me to marry this man, do you?"

He was silent for a little while. Finally he looked up and met my eyes.

"No, Barbara, I do not wish you to marry him; but I will not oppose you if you wish to do it yourself. Delaney wished me to use more influence than this negative consent, but I told him that the matter was in your own hands. I would only report to you what he had

said and let you make your own decision."

"Had you any real doubt about what my decision would be?" I felt a little injured.

"My dear, your manner with that strange young man has been distinctly encouraging; your interest in him has been perfectly apparent. You seem to enjoy your little bouts of wit with him; you seemed interested in his point of view; his very impertinences you appeared to find an attraction. You've been off motoring with him alone a great deal. I confess that I have been worried. I confess I didn't know but that Delaney knew you better than I did when he claimed that you were really willing to marry him, only you were not yet aware of it yourself! I'm glad you can assure me your heart is not engaged. But I think it is a pity you have given him so much ground for hope."

I burst out into some sort of defense of my conduct. I was not responsible for the man's appearance on my social horizon, I reminded papa with some asperity. And as for encouraging him—that was all nonsense! I had lost no opportunity to let him know that I considered his suit of me absurd, pure nonsense. I talked with angry excitement, exonerating myself.

"The only way in which you can convince any egotistic male of that"—papa interrupted me with a melancholy smile—"is by withdrawing your society from him. If you persist long enough in refusing to see a man, he comes to believe, in time, that you do not want to see him. But as long as you do see him, it's perfectly idle to keep telling him that you don't want to."

"He has seemed to come to see you more than me," I reminded my guardian. He winced a little. "I'm sure I don't know what has brought him," I went on, with a sense of daring. "I should have thought that whatever busi-

ness he had with you could have been settled long ago. And if it had been—settled and closed, I mean—then he needn't have come here any more, and I need not have seen him."

I waited for my stepfather to take up the challenge. I waited for him to explain why it had been necessary for James Delaney to keep on coming to see him. But I waited in vain. He stared dully into the fire. I grew weary of waiting, and finally I arose.



"Well," I said, "I don't suppose there's any use in thrashing out the subject now. But I don't intend to marry him, and you may tell him so, with my compliments."

"I'll try to be a little less curt about it than that," answered Mr. Wynn, rising also. He looked at me rather affectionately, and shook his head. "You're an attractive girl, Barbara, although it goes against my Puritan grain to pay you a compliment. I don't altogether wonder that Delaney lost his head a bit. And don't think me foolish for saying that I should be careful about him if I were you. He has more brains than I ever supposed young Jimmy Delaney would develop, but he's just as lawless as ever. He's an unscrupulous man, my

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dear. I should avoid him entirely, if I were you." He led me gently to the door and bade me good night.

I went upstairs, pondering, not so much upon James Delaney's impertinence to me as upon the exhibition of his power over my stepfather. He had fulfilled his boast; he had made Mr. Wynn the bearer of his message to me on the very day he had said he would. I shivered a little, but there was excitement as well as vague dread in the shiver.

I have already confessed that I am, in these my later days, ashamed of my behavior during that period of my existence. What I have to chronicle now is matter of still greater mortification to me than anything I have narrated yet. But, as I have said before, I did not choose what sort of woman I should be; I did not choose what strains should mingle in me, and make me what I was; I did not choose my daring and impetuous father, with his impatience of restraint, his eagerness after life, his magnificent gambling spirit. And so perhaps there is no need that I should be too deeply ashamed of the perverse and ardent emotions of which I was the prey after this talk with my stepfather.

I left his room that night and went upstairs as stoutly resolved upon decorum as ever any young woman in the world was resolved upon it. I had been really angered by James Delaney's persistent threat to have his own way with me; I had been a little frightened by all the evidences of his power over my stepfather. Certainly it behooved me, as papa had suggested, to walk circumspectly—and circumspectly I would walk! Upon that I was determined. I would not again see this cave man of a lover. I would occupy myself with my own friends, my own pursuits, and would let him disappear again to his mountain peak, his outlaw camp,

or any of the strange asylums of his choice.

In pursuance of these excellent resolutions, I absented myself from Hartford for a while. I went down and visited Madeline in the "seven-room flat in a doubtful neighborhood." Tommy was not at home. The days dragged a little. The younger children struck me as tiresome, Mrs. Royle seemed selfish. I could detect in her anxious eyes whenever they rested upon me the fear that I had intentions in regard to Tommy—the fear that I intended to play superman to his mere man—the fear that I was about to withdraw her son from his allegiance to her.

At first I thought her anxiety due merely to her descent from affluence into penury. I thought she was afraid of the woman whom Tommy might want to marry and who might want to marry Tommy, because Tommy was now the chief support of his family. I thought to myself that she was a stupid woman not to realize that, should Tommy marry a rich wife, her lot and that of her family must be improved. But when I managed, with infinite tact, as I supposed, by talking about some other impoverished young man who had married a rich girl, to convey to her my own ideas on the subject of the proper behavior of rich daughters-in-law, her anxiety did not abate in the least.

Gradually I discovered that she did not approve of me. It was something of a blow. She had known me since I was a little girl—it was ridiculous that she should act now as if I were a stranger, a person of unknown tendencies. But, as I learned from Madeline, who was congenitally incapable of keeping a secret or of telling a lie, Mrs. Royle had first begun to disapprove of me when I had seemed to prefer Count Antonio Vitelli to her son; her disapproval had been fed by those lurid "stories" printed in the news-

papers at the time of the count's death. The phrase "beneath his betrothed's window" had dwelt in her mind. I found, to my horror, and very much to my anger, that there were certain rude, old-fashioned, plain-spoken adjectives that Mrs. Royle was capable of applying to me and my conduct. "Fast" I discovered to be one of them. I was furious. I hated Mrs. Royle. Altogether, my visit to Madeline did not tend to increase my comfort.

When I went back to Hartford, things seemed to me particularly dull and lifeless. Mr. Wynn had gone away for a week on business. Mrs. Wheelwright appeared more of a tabby cat than usual. The doings and excitements of my little group of intimates were all puerile. There was not even any amusement in flirting with the men who presented themselves for that generally enlivening purpose—they all seemed flavorless boys.

The truth is, I suppose, that all my experiences for the last year and a half had been too exciting to permit me to drop again comfortably into the uneventful atmosphere of daily life, as lived by my highly respectable associates in Hartford. With excitement denied me, I was like the victim of a drug habit without his drug. And finally I, like him, reached the point where I had to have my stimulant.

It was on a bright morning in late May after a three days' sodden rain. I awoke feeling that I must do something, brilliant, daring, amusing, to celebrate the world's release from the long, dreary downpour. The dancing sun seemed to dance in my veins. The brisk, sweet-scented air called me to adventure. And even while I was having breakfast in my room, the telephone upon my bed stand rang. I lifted the receiver with a smile—I felt that this was to be the response to my mood. It was. It was the voice of James Delaney that I heard speaking.

"Haven't you punished me long enough?" he asked. "Haven't you ground me to a fine enough powder?"

"I don't know what you mean," I replied.

I was fairly beaming into the instrument. His very voice was so much more satisfying than the whole bodily presence of all the young men with whom I had been endeavoring to play during the past fortnight or so.

"Oh, yes, you do!" he contradicted me. "You meant to punish me, and, you've done it to the queen's taste. But enough's enough. Can't you be human? To-day's a day to make even an adamant heart like yours kindly. Let us go out into the country together and see things grow."

"I didn't know you were interested in botany, or agriculture," I temporized.

"Oh, you don't begin to know my interests yet," he assured me lightly. "But you will come, won't you? I'll be round in—is ten minutes too soon? What! You aren't up yet! Indolent being! Well, then, say fifteen minutes— Oh, well, I'll wait twenty, if I must."

I made him wait three-quarters of an hour. It was thus that I compromised with my resolution never to see him again. It was also thus that I gave myself an opportunity to try on three costumes before I finally selected one to wear.

I'm not likely ever to forget that drive. Though I had lived the main part of my life in the State, and he only a short part of his, he took me over roads unknown to me. The country was wonderful and beautiful, and as we journeyed toward the northwest, it grew wilder than I had believed possible. There were miles when we passed no dwelling houses, only here and there a fallen chimney or a half-burned barn to mark where dwellings had been. Some of the second growth

of timber through which we ran was almost as dense as first growth.

We stopped for luncheon in a little hamlet high upon a hillside—a tiny place, with all its few buildings strung along one green street. There was no hotel, but from the car Mr. Delaney produced all the ingredients for a perfectly satisfactory repast. We ate it in the shadow of the elms opposite a white-steeped church. The air was full of lilacs and apple bloom. Then we were off again over roads strange to me—strange and wild and sweet, and lonely with a poignancy of solitude such as I had never before felt.

He told me that he, with what he termed a natural taste for outlawry, had discovered in the northwestern corner of the State a wicked little triangle beloved by evildoers. Here a man whom the authorities in Massachusetts were after could step across a line into New York or Connecticut and defy them; and so with each of the other States. This advantage of the neighborhood had not led to its settlement by the most desirable class of citizens. In fact, it was very sparsely settled at best, but he assured me that I would find it rough and picturesque. Laughingly he admitted his acquaintance with it and its citizens. He had borne messages from some of his Western outlaw associates to their fitting progenitors in the East.

After luncheon we left the main-traveled roads and took what seemed to me rather desperate chances along hill tracks and back-country paths. We were climbing, climbing, all the time. We passed lovely, deserted little lakes, lying high up on the rough sides of the mountains. We had passed out of the region of railroad trains and tracks hours before, or so it seemed to me. I suddenly awoke to the realization of how long it had been since I had seen the smoke of a locomotive or heard its whistle.

"We have been a long time in getting here," I remarked at last, looking at the watch on my wrist. "It's nearly five o'clock, and we've been the better part of a day in reaching this delectable no-law's land. Let me see—we've been gone since ten this morning— Good heavens! It will be almost midnight before we are home again!"

I spoke in honest alarm. However indiscreet I might have been, I had thus far confined my imprudences to skipping dances with uninteresting partners in favor of sitting them out with persons more amusing, to strolling too long in gardens, to lingering in the conspicuously remote corners of conservatories, to dancing a little later than any one else, and to similar rather harmless exhibitions of lawlessness. I had never spent the hours of the evening, unchaperoned, away from home. So my agitation was sincere. James Delaney laughed, a low, pleasant laugh.

"You do it awfully well!" he told me, running the car carefully over a green hummock in the grassy road.

"Do what awfully well?"

"The innocent. Of course, it has come as a complete surprise to you—this finding yourself alone on a little mountaintop nearly a hundred miles from home at evening fall, with your berserker of a lover?"

There was insolent unbelief in his voice. There was something else that frightened me more.

"Just as soon as the road permits," I said, and I tried to speak with the insolent authority I should use toward an insubordinate servant, "I wish you to turn this car around, and to go home as rapidly as safety will permit."

"Are you quite sure that that is what you wish?"

He brought the car to a standstill. All around us the sweet fern was knee-high, and it filled the spring air with aromatic fragrance; there were torn, pale clouds of the sunset adrift above

us. A baby moon was high in the heavens—a little silver wisp of a thing, younger and more innocent than anything else in the world in its fragile purity.

"I am quite sure," I replied steadily.

I kept saying to myself that I should be in no danger if only I could remember that a woman was always mistress of every situation in which her sex was a factor—that was the comfortable creed on which I had been brought up. I kept saying that I was in no danger so long as I could remember to convince myself that I was not, as long as I could remember that I was living in the twentieth century—that I was a girl of the protected classes, a rich woman, a woman whom no one would dare seriously to affront. So I kept my voice steady in spite of the unaccountable wild beating of my heart.

"Guess again, sweetheart," he said.

He leaned toward me, in all that spring freshness which seemed made for the sacredness of young love, and folded me in a tight embrace. For an instant I was minded to struggle, to fight with force against the violation, the profanation, of that caress; but I knew the uselessness of physical resistance to the great strength that encompassed me. I sat unyielding, rigid, but I did not struggle. He released me after a second.

"Your eyes belie your temperament," he told me, "if it is like this that you meet your lover."

"I have no lover," I replied. "I want you to take me home at once!"

"I suppose I ought to tell you that I am very sorry we have run out of gasoline," he replied lightly, "but, as a matter of fact—and I am scrupulously careful about my facts, which you, my pretty one, are not!—I am blamed glad of it! You foolish child, you didn't suppose it was all make-believe with me, did you? I've been in earnest. You've won me—you've got me—you're

responsible for me—and by the Lord Harry, you'll have to assume the responsibility of me! You've led me on, and here I am. Here we both are. I know where there is a discredited preacher in this community, but he's not so discredited that his license to perform perfectly valid and binding marriages has been taken from him. We will seek him, if you say so—and this shall be our wedding night, with bell and book. Or, if you don't say that—"

He broke off, smiling amiably at me. The woods were full of the mad, sunset rapture of young birds. The colors overhead, afloat from the west, grew more glorious. The evening began its work of distilling sweeter, subtler scents from all the world of growing things. I caught the inside of my lower lip between my teeth to keep from shrieking. For, looking upon him as he faced me there, looking upon the great beauty and the great strength of him, I seemed at last to see his lawlessness as real—no pose. It was the essence of the man—that determination to have what he wished regardless of all opposition. Still, I used the vain little weapon of the word against him.

"You don't understand me," I said. "I mean absolutely what I say. I want you to take me home."

"And I mean—also absolutely, as you put it—what I say, Barbara, my rose of the world. I haven't the slightest intention of taking you home until you go as my wife."

He said no more. I did not waste my strength in any further futile words. In my vanity, my ignorance, my folly, I had delivered myself into his hands. He had made no secret of his scorn for all laws and all conventions; he had made no secret of what I suppose he called his love for me—that passion for possession which he dignified by that name. I had played with fire knowingly, deliberately, and for Heaven



I stepped down closer to the shore; I felt an anxiety greater than I had felt yet—a strain, a tension—in my hope that these men would prove the sort who might be trusted to befriend me.

knows what obscure reason. Now I was learning something new about fire.

"Barbara," he said, while I sat still, trying desperately to think, but evolving nothing but a repetition in my mind of something that ran: "This can't be true! This can't be happening to you! It can't be happening to you!" "Barbara, did you think I was not in earnest all this time? Why, my dear, I've determined to possess you ever since the first time I saw you, dark and fiery and

stingingly sweet! You don't remember the time—it was a year ago—a little more than a year ago. You were coming up from Washington in a party—do you remember? You and that dago who was figuring upon marrying you were together on the platform of the observation car—it was some senator's private car—do you remember?"

My mind was singularly alert. Instead of being stunned by the situation in which I found myself, it seemed to

me that my faculties were preternaturally sharpened. I had heard him say that it was the first time he had seen me—that trip, which I remembered well enough. The first time? Had that been a slip of the tongue? Or had it been the first time he had seen me—he, Jimmy Delaney, who had come to our house for holidays until he had grown too bad to be invited any longer? And slowly I began to recall that a great, blond giant of a man had stared at me on that trip. Had that glimpse of him been the thing that had made him seem familiar when I had seen him at Twisted Trees?

"I remember," I said breathlessly.

"I asked some one who you were—they all knew! Your engagement had just been announced—the papers were full of it—'Another American heiress buys a title' was the caption beneath your pictures! And I said to myself—and to the man who told me who you were—that you were too good a thing to be snatched away by any blamed foreigner. And so you were, my sweet! I told that man how you would look mounted on a little cow pony, swinging across the plain—how you would look climbing a trail up toward the snow line. I was done for, the first minute I saw you. And—let me tell you something, Miss Barbara Wynn, that may save you time and trouble to know—I've never wanted anything yet that I haven't got. I wanted you; I set out to get you—and now—I've got you!" I felt his breath against my neck.

"It's all very interesting," I said, sitting rigid, "but you'll have to tell me the rest when we are at home. For we must go home. You were—making a bad joke, were you not, when you said that we had no more gasoline?"

"I was speaking the simple and unadulterated truth."

"Then you deliberately set out with—enough to carry us through?"

"I deliberately set out with just

enough to see us through—to the exact point that we have reached," he answered me calmly. "Come now, Barbara, haven't I said enough to make you understand that I'm in earnest? We are miles from home—miles from civilization. I know where this trail leads—it leads to my clergyman friend's. But you can't find it alone."

"Do you mean to say that you're so abject that you would marry a woman who hates you? For I do hate you!"

"Hate like yours is so close akin to love, my dear! May I smoke while you consider the question? Perhaps you will join me in a cigarette?"

"No, thank you," I snapped. Then I said, more quietly, for I began to appreciate that I should never escape the situation in which I found myself except by a master stroke of diplomacy: "I am quite in earnest, Mr. Delaney. I do not—care for you—"

"Ah, but you do! You have the blood that beats in time with mine, the glance that kindles to mine, the color that comes and goes as I call it or send it hence. Love, you infant! What do you think love is, anyway? What have the silly books told you—one-half so truthful as this?"

Again he folded me to him, and I felt the horrible sting of his kiss on my face. Then I forgot my determination to be calm, to let nothing tempt me to violence. I beat against him with my silly, feeble hands; I cried out against him; I screamed and struggled. He caught both my fighting fists in one of his, and held them as in a vise.

"I don't know whether you mean this or not," he told me, his face close to mine and menacing now. "But I mean what I say. You will marry me tonight—or not, just as you please! But you know what your reputation will be worth after a night spent away from home with me. Ah, Barbara, Barbara, why be foolish? Why be childish? I can make you happy—happier than you

have ever dreamed of being. I can teach you the sweetness and the wildness and the glamour of life. Do you think you would ever get that, married to one of your stuffy, good citizens, whose ideals are bounded by a brown-stone front on one side and a trip to Europe on the other—to whom the one is a home and the other adventure? Oh, my girl, my girl, you're alive; you're red-blooded! You would stifle, die—no, you would merely kick over the traces and make a scandal by and by. Be wise—be happy!"

There were wonderful, undreamed-of fluctuations in his voice. I heard them—I recognized their beauty. And that recognition taught me how far from loving him I was. Why, a woman who loved him could never have resisted the pleading and the promise of that voice! The golden evening faded little by little to pearl; the slim, pale sliver of moon grew brighter. Night drew near—and I was alone on the mountain with this maniac! I pondered whether by deceit I could win my release; I would hold it no crime to lie to this trickster. If I promised to marry him when we reached Hartford, would that save me for the present?

But I remembered the lack of gasoline. He had put it beyond his power to save me. Deceit would be useless. Besides, there was something in me that refused to temporize with him. I would not yield, I would not pretend to yield, to him! Doggedly, angrily, I insisted upon that. I was paying dear for my love of excitement, I was paying dear for matching my wits against this utterly lawless creature's—but I would not pay dearer yet! I looked at him steadily in the deepening dusk.

"Listen to me!" I commanded him. "I mean exactly what I have said. I mean it as much as this—no matter how my reputation suffers for this unmanly performance of yours, no matter what people say or think of me—I shall

never marry you. I'd rather die. You have changed whatever feeling I had for you into loathing. And no matter what you say or do—no matter what disgrace and ignominy you put upon me, I loathe you still and I will never submit to you."

And as I spoke my defiance, I seemed to see the girlish portrait of my mother with the lilies of the valley below her shining eyes, her shining curls, her dimples. Poor, poor mother! I felt a pang of pity for her—a mother, to have her daughter despoiled of joy and hope and honor!

His answer to my heroics was a laugh, not angry, but indulgent.

"If you didn't have a temper, a spirit of your own," he said admiringly, "you wouldn't be a true mate for me. I don't care for the fruit that tumbles, ripe and sweet, into my mouth. Oh, you and I will get along famously after we've once played out this farcical battle for supremacy. You'll have to yield by and by; it's altogether absurd—this equality business. A woman follows her master, follows him gladly and willingly, once he has mastered her. Don't deceive yourself, Barbara. I'm not one of your tame men who offers his hand and heart, and sorrowfully and politely withdraws them when the lady rejects him. I don't offer my hand and heart until I am sure—pretty sure—of my woman. And when I do, it's too late for her to decline."

I sat still, making no answer, praying desperately, I suppose, in some inarticulate fashion of prayer. I heard him going on after a while about all he had done to see me, to be near me—about detectives he had hired to find clues to our whereabouts when we had sailed that winter, about chances he had taken to be alone with me on the yacht. I only half heard it all. I kept thinking of my mother's picture, and of how Mrs. Royle thought that I was "fast," and about Tommy's eyes—yes, and

about poor, dead Tony's deferential ways and supple surrender to all my moods.

And as I sat thinking or praying, waiting and dreading, a little, faint sound broke upon my ears. I started to my feet—it was the distant chug-chug of a gasoline engine's exhaust. It came through the dense thicket beside the road, from below. I gave a cry. I broke away from my captor; I flung myself out of the car, and clawed a way through the brush. And there gleamed upon my eyes a sight of salvation. A little below us was one of the small lakes we had seen dimpling the surface of the hills with blue all the afternoon. And on the water, reflecting now a bright crescent, moved a small motor boat. I gave a great halloo. James Delaney, at my shoulder, laughed softly.

"You've forgotten what I told you of this region," he said. "You've forgotten that the inhabitants have a natural sympathy with lawbreakers. What do you hope to gain? It will probably prove to be the disreputable father of my disreputable Western acquaintance, through whom I had my introduction here."

Nevertheless, I thought I detected a little anxiety in his manner, and I gave another loud halloo. The boat veered in her course; there was an answering hail.

"We'll go down to the water's edge," I told him, "and it depends altogether upon yourself whether I shall make a scene or not."

"Scenes do not bother me in the least," he answered nonchalantly. "And you are still forgetting the probability that the men in that little dishpan of a craft out there are acquaintances of mine."

I had not forgotten, but I did not believe that any one in the world would condemn me to the fate this man had

in store for me. I shouted again and waved a chiffon veil as a guide.

"We see you," called a voice, clear and distinct in the lessening distance. "What's the trouble?"

I took comfort in the voice—it did not sound like the degenerate outlaws' of whom James Delaney had been telling me.

"You had better tell them that we are out of gasoline," I remarked to him, "and that we need a guide also. And the guide is not to leave us until we come into Hartford—into the very street of the brownstone houses you dislike so!"

"You disliked them yourself not six months ago!" he cried—there was something like reproach in his voice.

"No, I didn't; I only thought I did. I've learned since then that I love brownstone—the thicker and browner the better!"

We moved down to the part of the shore where the little motor was heading. "This is your party," he told me, rather surlily after all his bravado. He had had no more idea than I that the curving arm of one of the pretty ponds stretched so far in toward the road over which he had taken me. My heart was singing hosannahs over the ways of nature; geographical formation had become a work of God!

"Very well," I answered. "I'll manage it, then."

I stepped down closer to the shore; I felt, for a second, an anxiety greater than I had felt yet—a strain, a tension—in my hope that these men would prove the sort who might be trusted to befriend me.

"We are stranded on a road above here," I said. "We lost our way and we're out of gasoline."

"Where you from?" demanded one of them.

I said that we were from Hartford, and he whistled his surprise.

"I guess we could let you have gas-

oline enough to get you back to some town," he said. "But—it's a crooked country up here, and sometimes it goes hard with people who've lost their way. I tell you what you'd better do. There's a little railroad station over there in that inlet"—he nodded toward the bend in the lake whence he and his boat had appeared—"and there's a train down to Brookfield—I think it's to Brookfield Junction—in about half an hour. We'll run you over, lady, and if your husband will lend us a hand in what we're going to do, we'll help him back to his road. It's the best to be done. There's no fit night's lodging near here, and he couldn't get home out of this wilderness before morning. Besides," he added aggressively, "I'm short-handed. I need him."

"What are you going to do?" asked James.

"We're going to make an all-fired effort to catch a make-believe parson up here who's got the inheritance laws of this part of the world hopelessly balled up by pretending to marry a lot of people when he had no right or license to, and who has brought in a few new customs from where he come from. We used to have everything but moonshining here—and now we've got that! He's running a still. I'm sheriff of this county, and I plan to catch him to-night. I'd be better off for another helper—I'll swear you in as a deputy, mister."

After I had sent a telegram to Mrs. Wheelwright from the little station half hidden among the trees, and had seated myself in the ancient, dusty, cindery car that was the sole coach on the train, I breathed, first, a sigh of deep relief. Then I laughed. And I kept on laughing. There was something so exquisitely pleasant to me in the thought of James Delaney, sworn in as a deputy to assist at the arrest of his friend, the outlaw preacher.

But by and by the fit of hysterical mirth passed, and I stared out of the

window at the darkening panorama of wood and lake and cleared field. It was an incomparably lovely evening, and more powerful even than the acrid smoke from the puffing engine were the sweet scents of the quiet countryside. I thought of the nameless horror I had escaped, and my breath went out from me in long, shuddering sighs. And then I thanked all the forces of good in the world and above it that the spring evening had not been made to stand to me for all the desolation in nature.

CHAPTER VII.

James Delaney had completed my education in one important particular—I knew now that, for all my love of adventure, for all my excited fondness for precipices, I was a daughter of civilization, and that the primeval male no longer appealed to me. Henceforth, strength in order, never strength in lawlessness, was to be my demand of men.

For a day or two I assumed that he, too, had had his lesson; I assumed that he would leave me alone. He might be my enemy, I said, and a dangerous one, with his power, his wealth, his cruelty, and his gay indifference to the world's standards. But that he would still pursue me, with determined effort, I could not conceive.

But he did so pursue me. Even when I won my stepfather's strangely apathetic promise to forbid him our house, I could not set foot beyond it without encountering him—debonair, superb, terrible. But the grim relentlessness of his chase no longer flattered, no longer fluttered me. It wearied and terrified me.

I cajoled Mrs. Wheelwright into slipping away with me out of town. We went to Marblehead Neck, and in a big seaside caravansary I thought I had temporarily eluded him. But when, feeling myself a free woman again, I

went down to dinner on the second night of our stay, there was he, in conspicuous consultation with the head waiter. And the head waiter, with well-oiled bows and smiles, was ushering him toward a table placed in the same bay-window alcove as ours.

He had told the truth, then, when he had boasted to me on that deserted mountainside of the detectives who reported to him all my movements! I returned at once to my rooms. I called Mr. Wynn on the long-distance telephone. Excitedly I entreated—I commanded him to have a stop put to this pursuit of me. It seemed to me there was a long, heavy silence before he answered. When at last he spoke, it was wearily.

"I'll be there to-morrow," he said.

"Please come just as quickly as you can," I begged. "I shall not leave my rooms until you do come. I can't bear this pursuit and this espionage any longer."

"I'll come," he replied, still wearily, still in that voice of listless discouragement.

Imprisonment in my rooms was not so severe a hardship as it might have been; they opened upon a small private balcony that overhung the cliffs and overlooked the sea. The hotel was a wooden one, and, although my balcony was inclosed at each end against the incroachments of its neighbors, the partitions were wooden ones. Sound could travel through them, though not sight. I had discovered that when, lying in a hammock that I had swung beneath my awnings, I heard my neighbors on the right discussing with considerable acrimony the college to which they proposed to send their son; their views were so divergent and so strongly maintained that I supposed the question a burning and immediate issue. It was something of a surprise to me, later, to see the young candidate for collegiate honors sailing a toy boat in a pool

among the rocks. Still, the incident had shown me that the privacy of the inclosed balconies was not complete. The day after my stepfather arrived, I had another and more sinister illustration of the same fact.

He had breakfasted in the dining room of our suite, after a night trip up to Boston. He had heard, with silent patience, my outburst against my pursuer. He had sighed as he had said:

"I'll see what I can do. It's too bad, Barbara, that you should be troubled this way."

"It's an outrage!" I stormed. "An outrage! The man hasn't the first faint conception of gentlemanly feeling, of decent feeling! Things have come to a pretty pass if the only place where I can be free of a vandal who has insulted me is on the high seas! But you may tell him that if it is necessary for me to spend my life on them, I will do it. I will not submit any longer to this sort of thing!"

"I'll try to make him see that he's behaving abominably," said my guardian heavily, almost hopelessly.

"I almost wish we lived in medieval times—I almost wish that you had a few feudal Southern ideas, and felt justified in shooting a man who bothers your daughter!"

Papa smiled grayly.

"There are some disadvantages," he admitted, "in an unmixed Puritan descent. But as for dueling with Delaney—" He laughed. "I suppose he's of the most beautiful swiftness with firearms, while I don't remember which end of the gun is the dangerous one. No, Barbara, I'm afraid we'll have to settle this matter in dull, prosaic style."

"Papa," I questioned him curiously, "have you always been perfectly satisfied with Mr. Delaney's proofs of identity?"

He shot a sharp glance at me.

"What do you mean?" he asked shortly.



The head waiter, with well-oiled bows and smiles, was ushering him toward a table placed in the same bay-window alcove as ours.

I related to him that little slip of the memory or of the tongue which had caused James Delaney to say to me, that May evening on the roof of the world, that his first glimpse of me had been caught when I was coming home from Washington. If that were so, I pointed out, he could not be the Jimmie Delaney who had once passed a turbulent holiday season at our house when I was a little girl.

My guardian followed my tale with strained interest. Then he seemed to relax, and he leaned back in his chair with a laugh.

"Oh, a lover counts time in the terms of his love," he said. "I don't imagine you made any profound impression at the age of six or seven, or whatever it was, upon that extremely bad boy who visited us; he was more occupied in making you cry by pulling your hair

and breaking your doll than in observing your promise of future beauty. I don't think you can build much of a plot on Delaney's reckoning as the first time he saw you that day a year or so ago."

"Then you're perfectly satisfied with his proofs?"

Again my guardian shot a curious glance at me; this time there was annoyance in it.

"Naturally," he answered, "he has sustained his claim, or he wouldn't still be here."

"Well, why doesn't he take his money and go away and leave us alone?" I asked petulantly.

"As a matter of fact," said Mr. Wynn, in a heavy, guarded sort of way, "Delaney hasn't changed his investments, hasn't even taken possession of his securities. He has simply drawn on me for his income. He knows nothing whatever of the market itself, and has a wholesome distrust of his own ability in it."

"So you are still taking charge of his property for him?" I cried, in surprise.

My guardian nodded.

"And then, of course," he added, with a faint smile, "this infatuation for you is probably a second reason why he doesn't 'take his money and go away and leave us alone.'"

"But, papa, if you really believe in his proofs, if you really believe that he is James Delaney, can't you force him to take over his property and leave you free?"

"I haven't wanted to be too insistent upon it. In the first place, you see, I was obliged to decline absolutely to let him touch even a cent of the income from the property until he should prove his identity. Since then— Oh, well, we might as well call it a sort of *amende* I'm trying to make him for having, perhaps, neglected him when he was a boy. But"—he paused, his eyes fixed themselves on a remote sail visible through the open window—"but I think that in

the present circumstances I had better insist upon his severing all relations with our family."

And then, somewhat slowly, somewhat heavily, like a man stricken in years, he arose and announced that he would go and look for the man he had come to see.

I awaited the outcome of the interview with intense nervousness, intense excitement. I wandered restlessly from one room to another of our suite. I rearranged flowers, redistributed ornaments. I summoned one of the hotel maids and set her to work darning a lace flounce; I telephoned the office about a yacht for an afternoon's sail; I telephoned the garage about an automobile for an afternoon's ride along the North Shore. But not all the feverish occupation I tried to make for myself availed to calm my nervousness.

Finally I went out upon the balcony. I heard my neighbors on the right talking. I wished to avoid their domestic discussions, so I took my parasol and book to the big wicker armchair at the extreme left of the balcony. There I sat and tried to read, but at the end of ten minutes I was still staring at the same spot on the same page, and I was conscious that my hands were clenched in a tight grip. There were two hot spots burning high on my cheeks. My pulses beat unevenly.

Suddenly, after I had closed the useless volume and had dropped it into the pocket of the chair, I became aware that people had come out upon the balcony at my right. Two men were talking together in a low voice. Suddenly I heard the well-known, cynical, impertinent laugh of my tormentor. I started to my feet, the instinct for flight strong upon me. Then I restrained myself, I sank quietly into my chair again, I held my very breath. I wanted to hear every word that those two voices uttered. But all that I heard was this:

"For God's sake, man, who are you?"

It was my stepfather who had spoken, in a voice of such repressed agony as I never before had heard. The words paralyzed my senses. Although the two men continued to talk, although much that they said must have been easily audible to me, I distinguished nothing more. I only heard, beating against my ears with every pulsation of blood through my body, the awful words my guardian had uttered:

"For God's sake, man, who are you?"

CHAPTER VIII.

After all, we had gone again to Twisted Trees. It was July, hot, oppressive, even among our mountains. One place had seemed to me no more tragic, no more dreadful, than another after that revelation of the Marblehead balcony. It made no difference to me where we went, what we did. We were living in a world of lies and mysteries, we walked upon burning quicksands, and no one spot on the earth's surface was better, freer, than another. I think I shocked some of my acquaintances by the apathy, the callousness with which I was able to live again in the place made so grim to me the last fall. But it is true that I had no emotion whatever in regard to it.

My stepfather had come from that interview with James Delaney after an hour or two, and had reported, without meeting my eyes, that he "rather hoped that Delaney had seen he was not proceeding in the right way to win a woman." I had not rebelled against this way of putting it. I had not tried to force his averted eyes to meet mine. I think I was as anxious to avoid his gaze as he was to avoid mine. What he thought of my sudden apathy, after all my fire, I do not know. He asked me nothing, told me nothing. I said that I was tired of Marblehead and that I wanted to go to Twisted Trees, after all. He nodded, said he was glad that

I was going to try to be sensible, and added that, as for James Delaney, he hoped I would not be annoyed any further. And that was the end of the matter for the time.

My way of meeting my problem that summer was not, I suppose, correct, either intellectually or ethically. I rode and played tennis and danced to exhaustion. Exhaustion alone enabled me to sleep. I shocked the supersensitive; I shocked Madeline Royle, who had come to spend a month with me, to the point of quarreling with me—though she did not reach that stage of disapproval until after the Reverend Horatio Quigley—in whose work at the Church of the Outcast she had been suspiciously busy—had played athletic-young-clergyman too strenuously with me. Then she gave me a lecture on my general unfitness for serious existence, and insisted upon going home!

I was insultingly patient and magnanimous with the poor girl, even mortoring her down to the station myself. We had a few minutes to wait for the train, and we were passing them awkwardly, stiltedly. I was hoping that she didn't mean to tell Tommy her unvarnished opinion of me. I didn't want Tommy, who set high value on Madeline's judgment, to believe that I was the selfish and worthless character she believed me. But I found, before she took the train, that she had no mind to let him know of our break.

"By the way, Barbara," she said abruptly, as she stood on the station curb beside the car, "unless you want to get even with me, please don't tell Tommy what has happened."

"I shall leave all the telling for you to do," I retorted, with outward scorn, but inward relief.

"He's so in the habit of thinking more about your interests and your happiness than his own—or any one's!—that he would merely be angry with me for withdrawing from you at a time when

you need me—as he would see it! Of course, you don't need me, you don't even want me. You have all the solace you desire for your griefs and perplexities in the amusements you indulge in——"

"Madeline, you're asking me a favor. You're asking me not to tell your brother that you have done something of which I suppose you are ashamed! So please don't work in a new arraignment of me."

Madeline glared for a moment. Then the ghost of a smile flickered across her face.

"I fancy that you have me there!" she admitted. "Well—don't tell Tommy that I left you in the lurch when you needed me—for you don't need me!"

"I shall tell Tommy nothing," I replied. "But I suppose it will eventually occur to him that we never speak as we pass by, or words to that effect."

"Oh, well, time and absence explain everything," said Madeline.

"Tommy's not a fool," I reminded her.

"Not about everything," she retorted, with a palpable reservation as regards his opinion of me.

I couldn't help laughing.

"Not about anything!" I corrected her good-naturedly. "Your train is coming, Mad—— Good-by!"

There was a sudden blur of tears before my eyes, and I think hers were misty.

"Good-by, Bab!"

"I'll be glad when you come to your senses!" I said, as she turned away; and she looked back over her shoulder to shake her head, half reproving me, half negating the idea of any possible resumption of friendliness between us.

So it happened that it was with a new sensation of utter solitariness that I went back to Twisted Trees. I had had "lots" of friends, of course—was I not young and spirited and rich, and the product of boarding schools? But

I had no other intimate than Madeline. I had no facility in confidences except with her. It occurred to me, self-pityingly, that I was the most desolate girl in the world; I was fatherless and motherless, I had no one attached to me by blood ties, and I suddenly perceived those to be the only real and lasting ones. What though I was an heiress and something of a beauty? The money, I told myself, attracted fortune hunters, and the good looks fools—and villains, I added, thinking of James Delaney's attempt at abduction. And now, for the sake of a clergyman whom I had not found interesting, I was losing the one true woman friend I had had!

At home I found that my stepfather had returned from some trip to the outer world, but, before I greeted him, I perceived that my tormentor was also in the hall. Mr. Wynn gazed at me abjectly, piteously; James Delaney with his usual insolence of amusement and admiration. There was a confusion of sound—greeting, apology, challenge. I made my own position clear.

"I shall lunch in my own room, Mollie," I told the maid.

James Delaney turned his face angrily upon me. Then he shrugged his shoulders, laughed his familiar, jarring laugh, and said:

"'The Taming of the Shrew,' Wynn! The most charming of the comedies—and the most rewarding occupation in life, I'm convinced!"

I passed out of hearing. Later in the day, I encountered them together again in the library, where so much of my life seemed to have come to a climax. I had believed them both gone out of the house, but they entered the room as I was looking for a book. Turning away from them without speaking, I saw the window opposite me darkened by a queer little figure on the terrace outside—an ancient man, undersized, bent, clean-shaven, and rosy. He was staring about him as he walked, and,

catching sight of me, he smiled and doffed a silk hat of ancient shape. His clothes were curiously out of place in this neighborhood, half "smart" folk, half rough country people; they were decent, well-kept, black broadcloth, of a cut as antiquated as his hat. He passed beyond my sight, and in a second I heard the peal of the doorbell. Another second, and Mollie's discreet knock sounded at the library door.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wynn, sir," she said, "but there's a gentleman to see you—Mr. Delaney, he says his name is."

She glanced inquisitively from one of us to another. My stepfather grew marble white, James Delaney opened his eyes with a flicker of surprise.

"Mr. Delaney?" faltered my guardian.

"Yes, sir."

"What— How old—" For an instant I thought that Mr. Wynn was about to faint.

"Oh, sir, he's an old gentleman—old enough to be our Mr. Delaney's father twice over," said Mollie coquettishly.

Papa seemed to pull himself together. He glanced at James Delaney.

"Let us have my connection in, by all means," said James, in his deep, amused voice.

My father nodded the instructions to Mollie, who went across the hall to the reception room, and in another second returned with my little old man of the terrace in tow. He looked at us all with clear blue eyes set in a network of fine wrinkles. He settled upon papa, who, for some reason, seemed incapable of advancing to greet him.

"You'll be Mr. Wynn, sir?" he said. "Mr. Lester Wynn, the friend of my poor brother, Daniel Delaney? And the trustee of his boy, James? I am Michael, the next of kin, sir, come to claim my nephew's estate."

I have the most confused impression of the few seconds that followed that

announcement of the old man's. We all stood staring at him, I think. And then the dazed silence was broken by a groan, quickly suppressed, and my stepfather sat heavily down in a chair beside the desk. I turned from looking at the old man to look at him, but his eyes were hidden by a hand held before his eyes. Suddenly he removed it and faced the stranger.

"Sit down, won't you?" he said distantly. Then he looked at James Delaney, standing, tall and commanding, beside the desk, and smiling upon the newcomer with a faintly quizzical smile. "You had better explain to your uncle, Delaney," said he dryly, "that you have claimed your own estate."

Mr. Michael Delaney stared at the tall figure.

"Delaney, is it?" he cried, with an upward glance of unbelief.

"James Delaney, at your service, Uncle Mike," answered my tormentor, with his everlasting air of conqueror.

The old man stared for a few seconds longer. Then he moved somewhat heavily to a chair and sat down. He seemed to shrink and grow gray in the interval. I suppose he was seeing the fortune he had hoped for wiped out. Seated, he continued to stare. Finally he spoke, and it was to my guardian that he addressed himself.

"Have you proofs he's James Delaney?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Mr. Wynn, moistening his lips.

"It'll be very queer," mumbled the little old man, "very queer! I never knew he was dead and gone until three months ago. It was on an old paper that wrapped up a picture from the States a friend had sent to me long and long ago. And there I read—" He fumbled in his breast pocket, and took out an old page of newspaper, carefully folded in a homemade pocket or envelope of tracing paper such as architects use. He handed it to my



"You'll hear those accusations again in a court of law, and you'll have to answer them with something more to the point than threats," asserted the old man loudly and angrily.

stepfather. "See for yourself, sir," he said. "It tells all about the time you went to find him, to meet him, and how he came, and how he then disappeared from you. And all about the weeks the

detectives searched, and how they were finding nothing at all about him. And how you thought he was maybe playing a wild prank, like many he's played before, him always being a great one for

mischief and badness. It come to us out there like the hand of God Himself, so strange our reading of it was. The picture a friend in the States had sent to us wrapped in that sheet—and it fell behind the partition in the post office, and there it stayed these twelve years nearly! And then they built an addition, and the old wainscot came down—and there was the picture the old friend had sent, and there the story how my brother's boy had not come to claim his wealth, and then we knew why Dan's son hadn't written these twelve years! When did he come?" He snapped the last question out with a vigor surprising after the singsong despondency of his narrative.

"A year ago," replied my guardian quietly.

"And you're telling me a lad like Jimmy Delaney was more than eleven years wandering about, and him with a fortune waiting and not coming to claim it! Man, it's nonsense!" He stared sharply at James Delaney. "And never was there a Delaney with the build of that one—sawed-off little runts, the whole of us. I ask you, sir"—he addressed Mr. Wynn again—"was not my brother, God rest him, a mite of a man, no bigger than myself?"

"He was short and stocky, but that has no bearing on the height of his descendants. Perhaps the boy's mother's people——"

"They was shorter yet, and ran to fat—the Monahans!" exclaimed the little man. "And tell me this, sir—did the boy, while he was at the schools and colleges where you were sending him, was he tall like this man?"

"He was taller than his father," replied Mr. Wynn steadily, "and he had not, perhaps, attained his full growth in those days."

"He had all the growth he was going to have!" insisted Michael Delaney, while his nephew smiled his lazy, an-

noying smile upon him, as if he were a character in a mildly amusing play.

Suddenly another idea seemed to occur to the new claimant of Daniel Delaney's fortunes. He began to speak rapidly in an unknown and, to my ears, a harsh tongue, directing his remarks at James. James stared back with his constant, cool ease, but when at last the old man paused on a questioning inflection, he merely shook his head and said:

"Guess again, uncle!"

"There! There!" cried Michael, with triumphant conviction. "Jimmy could speak the Gaelic before he could speak the English! And this one stands like a stick or a stone, and understands no word of what I've said to him."

"True enough, old gentleman!" admitted James, with indifference. "I didn't understand a word!" Then he turned to my stepfather. "It seems to me, Mr. Wynn," he observed, with an air of great reasonableness, "that we should do a little cross-examination ourselves. We are letting this traveler from the Antipodes have things far too much his own way. What evidence does he bring that he is my uncle? For, of course," he ended magnanimously, "if he proves to be my uncle, I shall see that he is reimbursed the expenses of his journey."

"That is very true," agreed Mr. Wynn, who seemed to have himself under better control now. He turned courteously enough toward the stranger. "Have you brought any proofs of your own identity, sir?" he asked.

For answer, old Michael drew forth from his pockets a mass of papers, carefully sewed in oilskin envelopes. He ripped one open, moved across the room to my guardian at the desk, and spread its contents before him. Mr. Wynn looked at them, but without seeming to apprehend just what they were. The old man lingered expectantly, but when papa's vague glances and fumbling

touch seemed to leave him no better acquainted with the contents of the papers, he moved closer and stood by his elbow to point out their meanings.

"You'll be seeing, sir," he began, "that these prove who I am. There's letters to me from my brother himself." He drew certain documents from the pile and spread them open before Mr. Wynn. "I guess it's yourself that knows my poor brother Dan's writing as well as any one. He was never much of a letter writer, but you see that he wrote a good deal about you, when you were together out there in the West."

He paused, as if to give my guardian an opportunity to reply, to say some pleasant, friendly thing of the man whose camp companion he had been so many years before; but Mr. Wynn merely nodded and uttered no word. Old Michael Delaney stared at him rather hard, rather offendedly, for a second. Then, with a little sigh, he folded his brother's letters and replaced them in the pile.

"Here'll be others to show who I am—" With fingers that had begun to tremble with excitement, he unfolded other documents, official-looking ones, sealed with great, red, notarial seals, written in the flourishing, impressive, legal script. "These affidavits," he said, "are from the consul, the American consul, in our place. They tell who I am and who my people are, and were. There's no doubt about *me*."

He squared his short figure and looked with a sort of self-respecting defiance at all of us. His glance passed over me and over my persistently silent guardian, and rested finally upon James Delaney. My eyes followed the direction of his, and studied that impassive face. There was not a shadow of fear upon the chiseled features, not a shadow of resentment. A trifle more grave he looked than was his custom, but even now the gleam of light mockery was not entirely quenched in his eyes. The old

man seemed to gather indignant strength as he looked at his alleged nephew.

"It's not me that there'll be any doubt about," he reiterated, firmly and forcibly. "But I'll never believe that that man there"—he pointed a gnarled, accusing finger toward the younger man—"is my brother's son. Why, it's mad! I would be to believe such a thing! Wasn't Jimmy all of ten before ever he left my house, that sheltered him when my brother Daniel, God rest him, had no roof at all for wife and child? Don't I know his looks as well as I know my own children's?"

"Twenty-four years is a long time, Uncle Mike," remarked James pleasantly. "Long, that is, for a young person; it doesn't make so much change in an older one. I'd have known you anywhere—you're not looking two decades older than the day you put me and my mother aboard the steamer at Melbourne."

The calmness, the intimacy with which he spoke, seemed to stun the older man for a second. He peered bewilderedly up into the younger face as if searching eagerly for some familiar traces. But the search was vain. He shook his head.

"I'll not believe it!" he declared. "I'll never believe it! There's nothing about him that looks like Jimmy. And he didn't recognize the Gaelic—he acted as if he'd never heard it lisped, and he brought up on it, as you might say!" The last words came with an air of triumph, replacing his puzzlement.

"I guess we'll have to tell you, Uncle Mike, the secret of my dullness. You have an imposing array of papers there, but I came to Mr. Wynn provided with a few myself. Chief among them was the letter from the authorities of the hospital where I was carried when I didn't show up again at my trustee's hotel." He nodded toward the ancient newspaper clipping which still lay on

the desk before my guardian. "That letter tells how I was brought there suffering from a fracture of the skull, and how, when I came out of the unconsciousness in which I was picked up, I had lost all notion of my own identity. Life began for me from that moment, so to speak. Fortunately I retained my knowledge of language and of the few arts that education had given me, but no knowledge at all who I was or how I happened to be in the place where I found myself. That was over twelve years ago. I did not regain any knowledge of myself as James Delaney until about a year and a half ago, and apparently there are certain respects in which I have not yet regained all of James Delaney's information, if the knowledge of Gaelic was one of my early accomplishments."

"Yet you say you remember me?"

The old man shot the question at him like a cross-examining lawyer. My guardian raised his eyes and watched the two combatants with a dawning interest in his eyes. I, too, felt that there was something crucial in the moment and in the question.

"Perfectly," replied James Delaney, with a smile. "I remember you and Aunt Maggie and my Cousin Meg—all of you—as if it had been yesterday that you put my mother and me aboard the steamer."

Papa and I both looked excitedly at the old man. How would he take this calm, almost indolent, assumption of family knowledge? I asked myself if James Delaney had made a bold guess, or was he indeed the person he claimed to be? My brain reeled. I felt myself growing physically dizzy with the whirl of excitement in which I waited. And, marking the bewilderment, the startled surprise, upon the old man's face, I knew that James Delaney had said the right thing—that there was an Aunt Maggie and a Cousin Meg back there in Australia.

"I don't understand it, I don't understand it!" he cried at last. And then, finally, my guardian took part in the strange conversation.

"Isn't it, after all, fairly simple?" he asked, with his manner of patient courtesy. "The simple, obvious explanation—can't you accept that as the true one, Mr. Delaney? It is twenty-four years since you saw your nephew. It would be strange if he had not grown out of your recollection of him. It is not at all unusual that he does not bear the family resemblances you expected to see. I am afraid you have had your journey for your pains, as far as Daniel Delaney's fortune is concerned—unless, of course, your nephew feels disposed to be generous with you." There seemed to me a touch of malice in papa's tones.

"I believe none of it," declared the old man, with sudden vehemence. "Not a word of it, not a syllable of it! You're in league together, you and this tall fellow that pretends he's the son of Dan Delaney and Katie Monahan. You've fixed it up between you to cheat me. I make no doubt but what you told him all about the family." His accusing glance was directed toward Mr. Wynn, and he thumped the desk in front of my guardian with that hard, work-distorted hand of his. "You'd be knowing all about us from hearing my brother Dan talk—yes, from hearing little Jimmie talk when first he landed! And you've taught this fellow what to say. That's how he comes to be knowing the names of my wife and my daughter! That's how he comes to be knowing enough about us to impose on me, or to try to. For he can't impose. There's something inside of me"—he beat the stiffly starched white shirt bosom beneath his broadcloth coat—"that tells me he's not one of my own blood. I feel it, I tell you, I feel it!"

"Your disappointment makes you rude, not to say slanderous," said papa



"No, I wasn't going alone. I was going to bring this lady with me. She—she is connected with the business."

curtly. "I overlook your accusations this time, but if they are repeated, I shall take steps to put a stop to them."

"You need have no fear that they won't be repeated!" asseverated the old man loudly and angrily. "You'll hear those accusations again in a court of law, and you'll have to answer them with something more to the point than threats. It's a conspiracy, that's what it is—a conspiracy. But I'll get to the bottom of it! I'll get to the bottom of it!"

He started blindly for the door, but papa stopped him.

"Your absurd suspicions," he began, "have made me forgetful of my duties. After all, you seem to be the

brother of my old friend. I would not wish you to suffer too much inconvenience. Where are you staying? How did you come out here? Can I not send you back to your stopping place in one of my traps? Or can I not persuade you to stay the night here with us? As I have said, I do not wish to be rude to my old friend's brother."

"Nor do I wish to be lacking in due respect to a relative," drawled James Delaney impudently. "Can't I do something for you, Uncle Mike?"

The old man paused on the threshold and looked at them irefully.

"Neither the one nor the other of you can do anything for me," he announced, "unless you've made up your minds to tell me the

truth, to own that you're trying to cheat me. If you want to do that and to save yourselves the trouble of being exposed in court, I'm willing to listen to you. Lost his identity, indeed! Am I a child, or a fool? But that's all you can do for me—own yourselves cheats. I came up here on my own two feet from the village, and I can get back the same way I came, with no thanks to any man's traps."

My guardian shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you please," he dismissed the subject, while James Delaney laughed heartily.

"As obstreperous as ever, Uncle Mike!" he remarked joyfully, and again there passed over the old man's face

that strange look of bewilderment, of doubting the evidence of his own senses and the knowledge of his own heart. Then, with a final shake of his head, he planted his ridiculous silk hat firmly upon it, found the doorknob, and went out of the room. I turned toward the desk, and saw lying upon it the papers that Mr. Michael Delaney had spread out to convince my guardian of his identity. I do not know what impulse moved me, but with a swift suspicion I crossed the room and gathered up the documents.

"I'll take care of these," I said.

Papa looked at me with a glance of mingled anger and abjectness. James Delaney, as usual, laughed. His laugh made me feel that I was melodramatic and absurd, but I clutched the papers firmly. Papa shrugged his shoulders.

"Keep them, if you want to," he said, with assumed indifference. "I suppose the old man will be back for them by and by, or that his legal representative will make a demand upon us for them." He smiled grimly.

I shall never know exactly why I proceeded as I did with those papers of old Michael Delaney's. In the final outcome of the affair, my disposition of them did not count for much; but meanwhile it was the means of enlightening me somewhat about the darkneses and complications in which I stood. It was the means of showing me how utterly alone I was in the world, and how sinister and incomprehensible were the forces working upon me in my loneliness.

I took the papers to my room and looked at them. There were the old, old letters that Michael Delaney's brother had written him—bald, bare communications, not quite illiterate, but written with the stiltedness, the lack of fluency, with which the almost illiterate write. They were from a Western mining camp, they were nearly three decades old, and they made constant ref-

erence to a new friend whom the writer had acquired—Lester Wynn, a young man who, so the writer proudly assured his brother, was "no end of a nob," "all kinds of a swell," but who was a "good friend—none better."

Then there were the other letters—the affidavits from Mr. Michael Delaney's own home, the statements of neighbors, of lawyers, of priest and of doctor, of mayor and of consul, all properly attested and all placing his identity and his relationship to the writer of those letters of the Western camp beyond cavil.

When I had looked at them all, with strange feelings welling up in me as I read—doubts and sympathies, pities and fears—I restored them all to their envelopes; then, moved by an impulse that, as I say, I did not understand, I wrapped them in heavy brown paper, sealed them, and directed them to Tommy Royle, in New York. I wrote him a little note of explanation to accompany the package. I ended:

I suspect I'm an awful fool to bother you with the care of these, but I don't feel comfortable with them in the house. Will you please deposit them in your safe-deposit box and keep them until either the old man or I ask for them?

A fever was upon me to be rid of the things with which I had burdened myself. I called for my car, and in a few minutes I was speeding down the decline into Leominster, bent upon registering the package and sending it at once. That done, and the United States made the custodian of Mr. Michael Delaney's papers, I made my way toward home in a more leisurely manner. A great weight was off my mind.

Two or three miles out of the village, halfway up the hill again, I saw, trudging sturdily ahead of me, the queer figure of our recent caller. There was no mistaking his black broadcloth, his silk hat, the short-legged trot of him. I slowed the machine down, as I overtook

him, and, as he stood to one side to let it pass, I brought it to a halt.

"Won't you get in, Mr. Delaney," I said, "if you're going far along this road?"

He blinked the dust out of his eyes and stared at me. His face looked drawn with anxiety, but when he saw who it was who greeted him, a friendly smile overspread it.

"Oh, it's the young lady from the mansion up beyond!" he said, in recognition. "Is it home that you're going?" I said that it was. "Then I'll be thanking you for a lift that far back. I wouldn't be beholden to either of those others, those men; but you're different—I could see that at once. And I left something behind me I'm anxious to get."

"You left your papers behind you," I said, as I opened the door of the tonneau and he skipped into it. "I took care of them myself, Mr. Delaney. I didn't like to keep them in the house, since they seemed important, so I've just mailed them to a friend to take care of until you wanted them."

He looked at me suspiciously, darkly. "You've just sent them away?" he demanded violently.

"Yes," I replied. "Somehow there seemed to be so much doubt about everything in that talk you had with my stepfather and your nephew——"

"He's no nephew of mine!" interrupted the old man, with sturdy conviction.

I couldn't help smiling.

"Well, with my guardian and the young man who claims to be your nephew," I amended my statement, to suit his humor, "that I didn't like to keep them on the premises. I should have sent them direct to you, but I didn't know where to reach you. So I registered them, and sent them to a friend of mine in New York, to be given to you or to me on demand."

His blue eyes twinkled kindly into

mine. A pleasant smile twisted the corners of his sunken, smooth-shaven lips.

"And is the friend in New York a young man?" he asked interestedly.

I don't know why I should have blushed violently at that question and at the look that accompanied it, but I could feel myself reddening to my ears.

"He's the brother of my most intimate friend," I stated, with absurd precision—or, rather, considering Madeline's present attitude toward me, with an absurd lack of precision. Mr. Michael Delaney seemed to approve. He smiled broadly, but with a friendly simplicity that robbed the smile of offense.

"I'm glad to hear it," he stated. "I'm glad to hear it. I thought, when I was back there in that grand house, that you looked fit for something better than that cheat that stole my poor brother's fortune from me. Oh, be sure that Michael Delaney sees a thing or two yet! He saw the looks that fellow's casting on you!"

"You're imaginative, I fear, Mr. Delaney," I answered, smiling.

Then it seemed to me that I owed some apology to my stepfather for the obvious lack of trust I had displayed, and I said haltingly something about how it had seemed to me that papers which were to be the pivotal point in a controversy ought not to fall into the hands of those hostile to their owner. He nodded gravely.

"You've a head on your shoulders, Miss Wynn," he informed me. "I'm thanking you heartily for what you've done. And when the time comes that I need them again, I'll ask you the favor to introduce me to the fine young gentleman that's taking care of them. And now, if you'll be letting me out, I'll make my way back to the tavern I'm staying at—the Parker House, they do be calling it."

"I'll take you down myself," I insisted hospitably.

There was something very winning

about his plainness, his shrewdness, the quaint, elderly friendliness with which he treated me. It seemed to me that I had had very little disinterested friendliness in my life.

"I'm not denying it would be a rest to my feet not to have to go traipsing down these hills again, if it isn't taking you too long."

"No, I have nothing in particular to do," I answered, and negotiated the turn of the machine.

It was to this incident that I owed the remarkable encounter I enjoyed half an hour later with Felicity Borkvist.

I had just brought the car to a standstill before the horse block that had stood for generations in front of the old, wooden, all-the-year-round hostelry of Leominster. It was a funny old place, that Parker House, across the street from the post office, flanked on one side by the courthouse and on the other by the Leominster Bee Hive, the village department store. A row of elms lived miraculously in the concrete sidewalk in front of it. It was of a dingy slate color, and against its front walls stood a long line of capacious wicker armchairs, in which the drummers who were its chief patrons were wont to sit, tipped back, on summer evenings. It was a hotel unknown to the frivolous population of Leominster and the surrounding country, but much patronized by the plainer citizenry. And from its front door, which opened directly upon the main street, there emerged, while old Michael Delaney stood thanking me, the trim, graceful figure of my ex-housemaid.

She was accompanied by another woman, but that fact I scarcely noticed at the second, having eyes only for Felicity herself. Remembering my meeting with her in Jamaica and her firm, audacious refusal to admit her identity, I had a breathless interest in seeing what she would do now. To my surprise, she made no effort to avoid me,

but advanced at once toward the machine, smiling her pretty, deferential smile. The woman by her side trailed along with her.

"Well, Felicity," I said, a little coolly, "you mean to recognize me this time, do you?"

Felicity gazed at me out of blandly uncomprehending, respectful eyes.

"But always, Miss Wynn!" she assured me.

She looked at old Michael, and back to me. Then she looked at her companion, and I did also. I felt myself stiffen slightly at the sight. She was a woman of thirty-eight or forty, I should say, with the expression at once hard and vacant, meaningless and vicious, that is the mark of most dissipated women. The coarse hair beneath her unduly large and overflowered hat showed many variations of artificial gold, with here and there a strand of original brown. Her flabby cheeks were painted. So were her loose, indeterminate lips. A pair of long, green-glass earrings dangled from the tips of her ears toward her overplump shoulders, which were amply revealed through the meshes of a cheap, yellowish lace waist.

I think I had never looked so near upon a woman of her class before, and there was a cold anger in the distaste and revulsion that I experienced toward her. The easy sympathy that I had felt for the erring, met hitherto only in print, was lacking now. Why did such creatures pollute the air, I found myself asking. And I stared at Felicity for some sort of explanation of this unpleasant companionship. Old Michael, with some last words of thanks, had toddled into the hotel. Felicity hesitated, with an awkwardness rare in her. Finally she spoke, flushing a trifle as she did so.

"I was just going to go up to Twisted Trees, Miss Wynn," she said. "I—I heard only a little while ago about Carl's death. Is it—is it true?"

"It is," I replied brusquely. I did not believe her tale of ignorance. "It seems very strange you should not have read of it—Twisted Trees and all that pertained to it was so much in the papers last year. It's very strange you should have missed it."

"I heard it only a little while ago," repeated Felicity stubbornly. "I never read the papers, except the French papers. If I had heard of it before, I should have come back long ago. Is it true that—that he—that he made away with himself?"

"Quite true," I answered shortly.

A look strangely compounded of aversion and relief passed over the pretty French girl's face.

"Then I suppose there'll be some money for me. Did he leave any will, Miss Wynn?"

"I don't know anything about his private affairs. Doubtless you can learn all about them from Mr. Wynn or Mr. Everett Blake. He took an interest in poor Carl's affairs at the time, I remember."

"Thank you, Miss Wynn," said Felicity.

My hand was on the wheel, my foot ready to press down the lever, when she stayed me by a new gesture. There was something approaching a command in it.

"But, Miss Wynn, just a moment! I was coming up to Twisted Trees. I had something to say to Mr. Wynn—something important, something very particular. Not about my business or Carl's. I was going to hire a rig to go up, but perhaps if you are going right back—"

She ended upon the note of request. I looked pointedly at her companion. The woman still stood at her shoulder, at once deprecating and impudent in attitude.

"You were coming alone, of course?" I said.

Felicity was, for a few seconds, more at a loss for words than I had ever

known her to be. She seemed to have lost all her accustomed *savoir-faire*. It was with almost American or Anglican crudity that she finally blurted out:

"No. I wasn't going alone. I was going to bring this lady with me. She—she is connected with the business." She spoke the final words with more assurance.

"Oh, very well," I answered. "Get in, and I'll take you up."

I was too anxious to see Felicity alone, to get a chance at her, to let slip this opportunity, little as I enjoyed acting as transport for the sort of person she had produced as a companion.

I said nothing to them as we rode up the mountain toward the house. Occasionally I heard the sibilance of whispered conversation behind me, but even in the tonneau not much was said. Once I overheard an unpleasant, throaty, nasal twang announcing:

"I'm going to stand up for my rights, that's what I'm going to do. An' those that don't like it can lump it!"

We went into the house together. Felicity's quick eyes took in the hall in which she had been wont to ply her cleaning arts, and she smiled as if in pleased recognition. She looked with a sort of condescension upon her successor to the black-and-white uniform and the feather badge of office. But the momentary satisfaction passed. There returned to her manner the unusual awkwardness that I had marked in the village.

"You had better wait for Mr. Wynn in the library," I said, when I learned he was not in the house. "And, Felicity, before you go, I want very much to see you. If you will send me word when you are through your talk with Mr. Wynn, I will have your friend taken over to the farmhouse, where Mrs. Lucas will give her some tea, and I'll have you brought up to me."

Felicity's expression conveyed a great deal. It conveyed, for example, a slight

disdain for the person whom I had named her friend and a gratified sense of importance at the prospect of coming up to tea in my rooms; and, finally and chiefly, it conveyed a sort of panic. It was this last look on her face that found confirmation in her words.

"Oh, Miss Wynn, please, couldn't you stay while I see Mr. Wynn? I—I'm afraid to talk to him alone."

"I told you we'd ought to have a lawyer come with us," interjected the other woman.

I looked at her with a new, frowning attention. I found that I had a great desire to remain and be present at the conference. Felicity had turned sharply upon her.

"You don't need a lawyer when you're dealing with ladies and gentlemen," she announced, with superiority. The woman laughed shortly.

"Oh, my eye, don't you?" she jeered. "Anyway, not at first," Felicity conceded.

And then there came tramping through the hall, not only my stepfather, but the omnipresent James Delaney. Could nothing rid our premises of the man? I was filled at once with fury and with the realization of the futility of all fury. I think it occurred to me, in a red vision of anger, that I should never be rid of him until he died. I appreciated now the feeling that drove men to murder. My stepfather looked already, it seemed to me, even more pinched, more worn, than when I had left the house. For his sake, even more than for my own, I

desired that we might be rid of this man who, hour by hour, seemed to sap papa's strength, his very manhood.

"Papa," I began, indicating Felicity's presence, "I met Felicity in the village—Felicity Borkvist. You remember her—poor Carl's wife? She wants to see you. She has something to say to you."

Papa looked at her, and from her to her dingy companion. James Delaney, too, looked at them both, with indifferent, casual eyes. The woman stared from Mr. Wynn to James Delaney without a sign of recognition in her heavy, blackened eyes. I saw Felicity watching her curiously.

"Well, Felicity," began Mr. Wynn, "what can I do for you? We advertised for you after your disappearance and Carl's suicide. He had some savings which he willed to you. I dare say you wanted to talk to me about those matters?"

But Felicity, after another puzzled survey of all the participants in the little drama, shook her head.

"Yes, sir, by and by," she said. "By and by I want to find out about what Carl left. —But now—why, now, sir"—she broke off into a sort of embarrassed laugh—"I promised to bring this—this person here—to tell you her story. She — Tell Mr. Wynn what you have to say," she ended peremptorily, turning to the woman.

"Well, all I've got to say is that I'm Mrs. James Delaney, come here to get my money—my husband's money," declared the woman forcibly.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE JULY NUMBER.





Circumstantial Evidence

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.V. MAVER

A SAILOR and a tailor sat a-talking on a pier.

The sailor gave the facts, sir, and the tailor gave his ear.

"The swiftest fish that swims, sir," the sailor did avow,

"Is the dainty little mackeral, which same I'll tell you now.

"I loves a gal in Salem," the sailor did begin,

"But I was in Sumatra and wished her heart to win.

She'd often smiled upon me. Her eyelids seemed to move

The day we parted." "Yes?" the tailor said. "What does *that* prove?"

"But I was in Sumatra," the sailor did resume,

"And, wishin' for to know, sir, me joy or else me doom,

I wrote a fevered note, sir, in hopes her heart to move:

I wrote, 'I love you.' " "Hum!" the tailor wheezed. "What does *that* prove?"

"I wished to git that letter to Salem p. d. q,

And so I caught a mackeral from out the boundin' blue.

Unto his tail I lashed that note and set him on the move

Toward Salem, Mass." The tailor coughed and said: "What does *that* prove?"

"The very day that follored, our capting, Jacob Brass,
Spread sail and turned our vessel straight back to Salem, Mass.
It was the swiftest voyage, sir, that ever wind did move—
Took just ten days." "I see," the tailor said. "What does *that* prove?"

"I straightway jumped to land, sir, brushed all me garments clean,
And sought the dainty cottage where dwelt me Dotty Dean.
She sot there eatin' mackeral—she didn't seem to move
When I come up." "Of course," the tailor said. "What does *that* prove?"

"I see ye got the fish, dear," says I, 'which ought to be
A sort o' marriage token.' 'It is,' responded she.
'To-day I ups and marries the drayman, Hank McGoove.'
Which bowled me plumb." "No doubt!" the tailor said. "What does *that*
prove?"

"It proves," replied the sailor, "that when yer love ye wish
To tell, don't trust a friend, sir, a postman, or a fish.
Go do the job yerself, John." "I know——" the tailor said,
But the sailor seized a marlinspike and left the man for dead.



A Foothold for Two

♥ *by* ♥
♥ Evelyn Gill Klahr ♥

Author of "The Queen's Hat," "Love Everlasting," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

TAKE a farm some Sunday evening in March, with all the folks but you gone off for a week-end visit; the hired man off, too, as usual, for Sunday; nearest neighbors three miles away; telephone not working; not a thing to read; March storm howling outside and making creaking noises upstairs, like footsteps. That's pretty lonely business, isn't it?

Yes, but I can tell you something lonelier: Take a city—say New York—on a glorious May day; Saturday-afternoon half holiday; every one but you having a good time; every one but you out with some one he knows; lots of places to go, but no one to go with you. There's nothing in all the world that's lonelier than that.

Joel Landon found that out. Every man in the office but him hurried blithely away to meet some Saturday-afternoon engagement, and he was the only one who had nothing to do, the only one left with the whole lump of the afternoon hanging heavily on his hands. And, to make things worse, he had, that morning, corrected his employer, Mr. Lacey, who had answered him sharply; and he had been warned, on the side, by his fellow employees against impudence. But he hadn't been impudent, he assured himself. He had been respectful, but he had been right and his employer wrong, and he had told him so. And when it had proved so later in the morning, why hadn't Lacey apol-

ogized like a man instead of keeping up his offishness?

As he walked drearily around to his boarding house at noon, there was no one among the passers-by to give him a glance of interest or even of recognition. He had a moment of wishing that he were back on the farm. There, at least, for miles around, every one knew who Joel Landon was; but here he seemed no more visible to the naked eye than a microbe in the milk.

And, having thought of the farm, he couldn't for the life of him get his mind off it. He wondered what they were having for lunch, and he wondered if his father would put a tenant on that Armstrong place adjoining theirs, which he had just bought. In her last letter, his mother had said: "I guess dad would be tickled to pieces if his youngest son would come home and run it, but we don't want to urge you."

For the moment he had half a notion— Well, he'd see what mother said in her letter this week. They always came on Saturday morning, so he would write home on Sunday; and there was certain to be one at the boarding house awaiting him; absolutely certain.

But there wasn't. Not even a postcard. And he made up his mind right there that they'd have to get along without him on the farm.

Then it began to seem to Joel as if every one in the whole city were trying to see how lonely things could be made

for him. At the boarding house there were half a dozen young people in the hall starting out for a picnic, laughing and joking a great deal more than was necessary. One of the youths, with a bundle of steamer blankets on his shoulders, was giving an imitation of an Italian immigrant. It seemed to convulse every one else, but Joel found nothing amusing in it, and walked on, a bit stiffly, through the hall to the dining room.

There was dried beef for lunch, and some corn that, on the farm, would have gone to the chickens.

After making a half-hearted attempt to eat, he went up to his room. Oh, if only some one from around home would turn up—Harry Canning, or the Jones girls—so he could take them to the Hippodrome or the Bronx Zoo, or to Coney! The city was fine if only you could share it; but there wasn't a thing in the whole place you could do alone.

He knew he couldn't stay up there in his room long. All his big, country-bred body rebelled at the thought of being boxed indoors on a day like this. And yet out-of-doors was so darned lonely.

But there must be people somewhere, if only he knew how—

Then, because he was a boy at heart, in spite of his twenty-two years, he decided to make a game of it, to put it up to fate. The twenty-second person—twenty-two, being the number of his years, ought to be lucky for him—the twenty-second person he met after he left the house he'd speak to, and trust to fate to make it prove an afternoon's companion for him.

On his way down the stairs, he planned his campaign: He'd take his own purse, and pretend to pick it up from the street, and ask the twenty-second if he had dropped it. And then, as the twenty-second could not have dropped it, there would follow, naturally enough, a discussion as to where it

had best be advertised. And on that discussion Joel staked his hopes.

He also took an oath to himself that he wouldn't back out; he wouldn't, he wouldn't!

Numbers one and two proved to be immigrant women, chattering volubly in a foreign tongue. And right then and there Joel realized, with considerable heart-sinking, how very impossible twenty-two might prove to be. Save for a certain tenacity of purpose, predominant in his make-up, he would have backed out immediately, in spite of his vow.

Number eighteen proved to be a street cleaner; nineteen a woman with a perambulator; twenty and twenty-one, two rotund Jewish gentlemen, walking arm in arm; number twenty-two— Oh, his heart sank miserably! She was going to be, for she was already coming down the steps and moving toward him, the dourest-faced, fadedest of spinsters.

"Oh, not her, not her!" Joel protested hotly in his heart. And, almost as if in answer to his protest, she turned back to the house, and his spirits went bounding high.

But small gain, for coming toward him was a gum-chewing little school-girl, number twenty-two; and beyond her, alas! appeared number twenty-three, a girl just past her teens, in a shabby black suit, but with a face as sweet and fresh as a flower.

Joel Landon hastily revised his count. The two rotund Jewish gentlemen he counted as one, which made them number twenty; the schoolgirl became twenty-one, and she of the flower face twenty-two.

Scarcely had he passed her, when, hat in hand, he halted her.

"Beg pardon, but did you drop this?" And he held to view his own very masculine black wallet.

For the briefest moment she hesi-



"Gracious!" she gasped; then smiled tremulously as she held out her hand for the purse. "Thank you ever and ever so much."

tated, then her hands went speculatively into each pocket.

"Gracious!" she gasped; then smiled tremulously as she held out her hand for the purse. "Thank you ever and ever so much. Why, I never even heard it drop!"

Well! Well! In all his plans, twenty-two had never said that. But what could he do but hand her the wallet?

She took it, again hesitated a moment, then caught sight of the dour-

facéd spinster—the original twenty-two—down the street.

"Wait a moment," she instructed Joel, and, with a few running steps, she caught up with the older woman. Joel saw her open the wallet, his wallet, take a bill from it, and hand it to the other. He didn't pretend to understand it all, but, with youth's comfortable reasoning, he knew she must be all right because she was so lovely.

There was a bit of talk between the two women, then the younger of them came back to him. A deep pink had come into her cheeks now, and he saw that she was even prettier than he had thought at first. The shabby black of her coat, unrelieved by white collar or frill, came right up against the soft white of her neck,

increasing at once both her loveliness and her shabbiness.

"I hardly know how to thank you," she said. "I had no idea I had lost it. And just suppose a dishonest person had found it!"

"I'd hate to think of that," he assured her.

"There are lots of dishonest people in this city," she told him sadly; and he felt ridiculously concerned about her sadness.

She had turned back in the direction from which she had come, and he walked along with her. A bus was coming toward them.

"Look!" she exclaimed impulsively. "Would you believe it! Two vacant seats on top on a day like this!"

"It's an awful waste," he agreed eagerly. "Couldn't we—" His eyes almost more than his words begged her to accept the suggestion.

The very suddenness of it seemed to sweep her loose from whatever moorings of scruple or prejudice she might have had. For a moment, breathlessly, she looked into his face to assure herself of the clean, wholesome boyishness she saw there.

"All right," she gasped.

In the time of a breath the bus was hailed, and when it started on again, they were staggering up the steep, narrow steps together.

Once on top, the gay spirit of a May holiday seized them. Oh, New York was fine, Joel thought, when it could be shared. There were a million things to see and to point out to each other; there were a million things to laugh over. Funny things doubled their funniness; pedestrians grew interesting; store windows became enchanting; and the May day, now that it was shared, was utterly perfect.

Then the conductor spoiled it by mounting the narrow steps for the fares on top.

Joel's hand went mechanically into his pockets. *They were empty!* He had not brought one cent with him except what was in that wallet! The sudden horror that came into his heart was mirrored in his face, and the girl beside him, seeing it, in one illuminating flash interpreted it. The horror became reflected in her own eyes.

"That wasn't *your* purse?" she demanded feverishly.

There was no need of words. She read the answer in his face.

She turned her head from him, and he heard her give a shocked whisper to herself: "Glory!"

Then, as the conductor was upon them, she held the wallet open for Joel to take out a dollar bill.

"I simply can't give you back that bill I gave Miss Lushy," she warned him.

"Don't want it."

She turned upon him a puzzled little frown.

"But why, *why* did you do it?" she demanded.

Shyly at first, but easily soon—for it's mightily pleasant to talk about yourself to pretty and sympathetic ears—she poured out to her the loneliness of New York in May and the whole device of the wallet and the twenty-second passer-by.

"You poor kid!" she murmured compassionately, and patted a square inch of his coat sleeve with her finger tip. Then a teasing smile trembled on her lips. "By rights, poor old Lushy ought to be riding with you this afternoon. She's truly twenty-two, you know, instead of me."

"She's too late now," he answered triumphantly.

But she had grown grave again. "I'm not denying," she said, "that it's a terrible blow—and most awfully embarrassing, besides—to find that purse is yours. I'd like to know who'd ever have expected *that!* But it was for poor old Lushy I took it. Honest, I'd never have touched it for myself."

"I know that," he assured her fervently.

"Poor old soul!" she went on. "They gave her till to-day to pay something on her board bill, and, if she couldn't, out she was to go! Like an old cat, you know, that gets chased out of the house. Think of there not being a square foot of God's earth that some one doesn't have the right to chase you off of! I promised her a V to-day—not because I like her, but just so she wouldn't be

on my mind. Then I went and lost my job. And I was just trying to get up my nerve to stop at her place and tell her when you handed me that purse. I was scared to death for fear it would be empty. But it wasn't."

She put the wallet on the shabby black of her knee.

"It's yours," she said, "but I'm going to take care of it until I leave you. You'd be offering it to some one else, as you did to me."

"Just what," he demanded of her, "just what would be the point of that now?" But he was concerned about her. "What are you going to do if you've lost your job? What was it?"

"Sales. I'll get another. Easy, so long as you're young; but when you get like poor old Lush—oh, my stars! And poor soul, it isn't her fault. You just *can't* get ahead. It takes every cent to keep going, and then what are you going to do when you are old?"

"How did you happen to lose your job?"

She set her lips tightly together and shook her head.

"Why?" he persisted.

"I can't tell you."

He couldn't bear to think of a secret between them. "Why won't you tell me?" he begged.

"I can't," she said, with finality.

A shadow seemed to settle upon them. Even when the bus turned, just beyond the museum, it was still there; and it lasted, in fact, until they spied a Riverside bus approaching them, with two of the passengers on top showing symptoms of dismounting. Then, thanks to quick young wits and quick young muscles, they managed to leave their own bus and mount the other in time to get those two vacated places.

The flush of success and the excitement brought back again the spirit of holiday to their hearts, and they looked into each other's eyes and laughed, and then laughed again, and thrilled over

the late afternoon colors in the sky and the signs of spring about them, and were once more entirely glad of life.

Without reasoning about it, Joel blissfully accepted the marvel that in these few hours he knew her better than he had ever known any one. He was pouring out to her confidences and ambitions that it would have been impossible for him to share with his father or mother, for all that he'd known *them* for twenty-two years.

That she had stolen a purse only spiced the situation. His total ignorance of who or what she was didn't matter, since he knew her so well. Her shabbiness? Ah, it was that that tugged at his heart strings. And the sweetness of her mere presence filled all the lonely and empty places in his heart, and he was more glad than he had ever in his life been before.

As the sun sank lower, two healthy young appetites asserted themselves.

"I could break hunks out of this bus and eat 'em," announced Joel. "Couldn't we stop uptown here somewhere and have a little bite of supper?"

She wasn't sure.

"Please," he coaxed. "I couldn't eat supper alone—after *this*!"

"But, you see," she explained, "even if I did steal a purse and go riding with a strange man, I'm a nice girl."

"Don't I know that?" he assured her. "Just the same as you know I'm nice, even if I did play a silly trick to get acquainted."

"Well," she consented reluctantly, "if it's Childs' or some place cheap."

"You weren't so particular about my hanging onto my money *once*," he teased her. "Were you?"

The deep pink came again into her cheeks.

"You know I never dreamed it was yours. You do know that, don't you?"

"Of course," he consoled her. "Now for supper!"

Because of the youth in their feet

and the youth in their hearts, the hunt for an eating place in upper New York took on the color of a thrilling adventure. They stopped in front of every possible place, while she decided, by peeping into windows, whether it would meet her double requisites of cheapness and cleanliness.

They found one at last, and across the marble-top table they smiled at each other signals of satisfaction and light-heartedness. On the table stood a glass standard with coarse, stiff squares of linen, from which the passing waitresses took supplies to the other tables. Joel moved it to the center of the table.

"I think they are really more effective than flowers," he said, in jocular mood. "When we have a house of our own, let's always have a centerpiece of them."

She wasn't quite sure she liked the joke, and, without replying, she began studying the menu. Beefsteak—Joel insisted upon that—and combination salad and hot chocolate and strawberries and cream.

"And not another thing. No, sir, that's plenty! You can have my steak if you're so hungry." Then the grave mood came back to her—it was as if life had traced a recurring somber pattern



Then, as the conductor was upon them, she held the wallet open for Joel to take out a dollar bill.

on the bright background of her nature. "Poor old Lush!" she murmured. "She came mighty near going without her supper to-night. You're glad she has that money of yours, aren't you? Please!" she begged him to be glad.

"Give her some more from me," he insisted extravagantly.

But she couldn't encourage extravagance. "No"—she shook her head—

"you mustn't. You don't want to end up like her. Every one has to look after himself. I'm not going to end up like her," she declared fervently. "I'll get a job on Monday, and I'll save penny by penny until I can get a little speck of land of my own, a place I won't get chased off of, no matter what happens. And I'll have chickens and a dear little garden. And they can't starve me, no matter how many jobs I get fired from." Her blue eyes blazed.

"Why did you get fired?" he coaxed. She shook her head.

It troubled him. There was nothing he wouldn't have told her, and he couldn't bear it that she should keep anything from him.

"Please tell me, dear."

"Not dear," she corrected.

"But I don't know your name. Mine's Joel Landon. Joel."

"Mine's Rose Henney."

"Please tell me, Rose."

"I'm—I'm ashamed."

"Not with me," he protested.

"I—I stuck out my tongue at the manager."

A great relief seized him, though he scarcely knew what he had expected, and he threw back his head and laughed and laughed. He was still laughing when the waitress thumped their supper down on the marble table.

"You can laugh," said Rose earnestly, "but you don't know what it means to lose your bread and butter by just saying and acting what you are thinking. If people get fresh, it's right that they should have tongues stuck out at them, but it loses you your job just the same. That's why I'm going to buy standing room for myself on this earth. I want a foothold where I'm safe, where I can stick out my tongue if I feel like it, and yet go on living. Sure you don't want my beefsteak?"

He was indignant at the idea.

"Lot better for you to have mine, you little thing, you! If only it weren't

so tough! Wish you could see the steak we have at home—it's as thick and juicy and tender! Say, let me order you something more."

She was firm about that. "This is plenty—plenty! And the salad really isn't bad. Only, when I have my own place, I hope I'll have enough onions so I won't have to use the stems." She daintily removed a bit of green to the edge of her plate.

"Just wait till you taste onions right out of a garden!" he promised her. "What else are you going to raise?"

"Chickens and asparagus and forget-me-nots and lettuce and strawberries"—she examined those the waitress had brought her, small ones, floating in a bowl of milk—"nicer than these. Oh, much nicer!" She counted those in her saucer.

"Count yours!" she commanded.

"How many have you got?"

He counted obediently.

"Nine," he announced.

"I thought so," she nodded. "I've got eleven. Here, take one!"

He found her care of him so sweet that he allowed himself to be persuaded. Besides, you can accept a strawberry where you can't beefsteak. But, oh, if she could only see the suppers they sat down to on the farm—fried chicken and flaky biscuit and gravy and strawberries that *were* strawberries, and cream almost too thick to pour, and great hunks of mother's fluffy golden sponge cake.

"I'm going to have all kinds of chickens," she went on. "Big, fat white ones and cunning little speckled ones and shiny black ones—"

"That's just what you mustn't do," he interrupted, in concern. "You must get one kind and stick to it. And, say, look here! Do you know one thing about raising strawberries and asparagus and lettuce?"

She admitted reluctantly that she didn't.



He reached across the table for her hand, and held it firmly, in spite of its wriggling struggles for liberty, in spite of the obvious interest of the waitress.

"How much have you saved?" he demanded.

She flushed deeply with embarrassment.

"Seventy-one cents. But I'm going to begin in earnest now," she defended herself.

But he was thinking of the Armstrong farm. Since that slip of a girl had been talking about farming, the Armstrong place had for him become endowed with the powers of a magnet.

"Look here," he said eagerly, "would thirty acres be enough for a foothold for you? Room enough for you to stick out your tongue? I know a place that will just do for us. And it's right next to my own home, too."

She drew back a little, in alarm.

"Why, I don't even know you!" she reproached him.

"You *do*," he insisted indignantly. "And you're going to know me better. Listen!" He reached across the table for her hand, and held it firmly, in spite of its wriggling struggles for liberty, in spite of the obvious interest of the waitress. "Listen, dear! I want a foothold, too—a place where I can say I'm right when I am right. Why, I got my employer down on me this morning for just telling him the truth. So I'm going to write to father to save that place I was talking about for us. But we'll stick to our jobs here a little, and we'll have lots of rides and walks and things until you know me better, until you're sure you know me well enough,

and until we get a little money ahead to start on. We'll stay until we're so good and tired of holding our tongues in place, and so good and tired of hot, dusty, crowded cities, that a little green place of our own will seem like heaven to us. The city's all right for city people, but not for country folks. Yes, you're country folks, too. I don't care if you have always lived here."

Spurred on by the wide-eyed interest she gave him, he built up for her the details of that little green place: "A nice, airy house, with a wide veranda in front, and some posy beds for you, and a hammock under the trees when you're tired. And would you like a kitten? We could get one from home. And white plymouth rocks? Will you feed the chickens and gather the eggs?"

She nodded breathlessly, fascinated by the picture he was drawing for her.

"But I won't let you make butter," he decided. "We'll use all the thick, yellow, wrinkly cream we can, and send the rest to the creamery. You're not to get tired out, and you're going to do what you please and say what you please all day long."

Some of the intensity with which she had been listening she let out in a tiny sigh.

"But supposing," she inquired, "supposing, when you know me better, you don't like me?"

"Supposing rubbish!" he retorted, with tender scorn.



Mrs. Moffett and the Sheepman

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Sylvester Standard," "Dorinda Tries Domestic Life," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

MRS. MOFFETT, hanging the last skillet of her morning's washing on a nail behind the stove, heard from without a long, loud "halloo." She raised her head to listen, but without any appearance of interest. Mrs. Moffett was decidedly queer, as all the Juanita Valley agreed. Imagine a woman whose nearest neighbor is four miles distant, and whose nearest shopping center is thirty, showing no interest whatever at the sound of a strange voice in her wilderness!

Instead of proceeding at once to the door of the little adobe house, Mrs. Moffett went back to her sink, and busied herself with the cleansing of the dishpan. Beside the sink was a window commanding the prospect upon which her eyes had looked daily for the past sixteen years—a little patch of arid land surrounded by a picket fence, from which the paint had long since been blistered by the fervor of the New Mexican sun, and beyond that a wide immensity of earth, ocher brown, pricked here and there by the dusty green of cactuses, seamed by arroyos, and undulating slowly toward a group of bare-looking hills, blue and violet against the horizon. Mrs. Moffett surveyed the scene with the same bleak look in her eyes that they had worn for approximately fifteen years and eleven months of her sixteen years in the desert.

The call was repeated. The "halloo" sounded louder, nearer. With a sort of

resigned, repressed sigh, Mrs. Moffett stepped to the kitchen door and out into the blaze of sunshine. On this side of the little house, Mr. Moffett had fenced in a portion of the wilderness for his chickens, his milk cows, his pigs, and his driving horses—the more domestic part of his holdings in stock. Beyond the rough fence that inclosed this barnyard, a man stood, his expectant eyes turned toward the kitchen door.

"Well?" called Mrs. Moffett, impatiently. "What is it?"

For answer the man skirted the inclosure and approached Mrs. Moffett. He carried a small pack on his back, not like a peddler's, but obviously that of a man whose worldly wealth may be conveniently done up in a handkerchief. He had mild, anxious, kindly blue eyes, and he turned them confidently upon the gaunt lady of the house.

"Could you be telling me how far it is to Magdalena?" he asked.

"About sixty miles," replied Mrs. Moffett promptly.

The man seemed dismayed.

"I'd no notion at all, from what they were telling me back there at Copper Junction, that it'd be so far. They said it was fifty miles from there—or was it seventy? An' sure I've come a day an' a night's tramp since then."

He paused, and looked at her, as if begging her to solve the problem for him, and in some way to lessen the distance between him and Magdalena.

"You took the wrong trail," Mrs.



"Could you be telling me how far it is to Magdalena?" he asked.

Moffett tersely explained the situation.

"They told me there'd be a chance for a man in the mines up there." His anxious eyes begged for confirmation of this cheerful rumor.

"Couldn't say," replied Mrs. Moffett.

But, brief and unfriendly as her manner was, she did not turn and reënter her house. Juanita Valley, had it witnessed the phenomenon, could have told the traveler that this in itself was a surprising thing. But the man, not knowing Mrs. Moffett's customary social attitude, seemed depressed.

"It's awful hard, getting along, out here as well as back East," he said anxiously. "I'd hate to be taking that long tramp an' not to find work at the end of it." Again his gaze besought her for advice, almost for guidance.

Mrs. Moffett looked at him with something approaching kindness in her own eyes, deep-set among the fine lines carved by the bright sun and the alkaline winds of the territory. The wayfarer could never guess how the sight of failure seemed pleasant to her—because the sight of the success with which she was familiar was so hateful in her sight.

"I couldn't give you any advice," she answered shortly. "I keep myself to myself, an' I don't know anythin' about affairs

to the north of me or the south of me. I don't want to know," she added, with sudden intensity. "What I can do for you is to give you a cup of tea an' a piece of pie. You'd better come in."

"Thank you kindly. They have a good sound in my ears."

He slipped the pack from his shoulder and followed her into the bare, clean kitchen. If Juanita Valley had been privileged to see that sight, it would have thrown up its hands in sheer amazement. For Juanita Valley, knowing Mrs. Moffett, in spite of her "keep-

ing herself to herself," was interestedly aware that the sharpest thorn in her very prickly existence was the fact that Ed Moffett, well-to-do cattle owner, enterprising dabbler in mines and claims, was not content with his profits from these sources of income, but insisted upon running a sort of halfway house in the midst of the wilderness. Juanita Valley knew, although Grace Moffett had never opened her lips in its hearing on the subject, that she hated, beyond all her other trials, to be the proprietress of that inn in the desert.

She was better than her word with the stranger. She produced cold meat and bread; she fried eggs; she set forth milk, as well as tea; and the segment of apple pie with which she gave the feast its final grace was of a size that no more paying guest at Moffett's had ever had served to him.

As the stranger made way with these delicacies, he prattled on confidently about himself, his past, his prospects, his failures. Mrs. Moffett listened silently, her lips in their customary grim line. But in the depth of her sunken gray eyes there certainly beamed a pleasanter expression than Juanita Valley was accustomed to see in them.

"So you see, ma'am, from what I'm telling you, that unless my luck changes, it's not likely I'll ever return your kindness," the wayfarer ended the tale of his adventures simultaneously with the last crumb of the pie. "But it's time my luck was changing," he added wistfully. "Forty-six come next September, an' nothing has ever gone right with me yet!" He ended with a half laugh.

"You've been too easy," snapped Mrs. Moffett. "It's in your eyes, it's in your mouth—they look pleasant, they look human. There's plenty of men out here that you could take lessons from in gettin' ahead, but you'd have to make yourself over into somethin' about as pleasant as a keg of nails before you could do it."

The wayfarer had no means of knowing that this was the longest and most self-illuminating speech that the lady had made in the fifteen years and eleven months aforesaid.

"Well, I dunno as I'd want to be buying success at the price of having a stone in place of a heart," he replied. "After all, I'm not so bad off—I've no one depending on me. An' it doesn't so much matter if a man that's alone in the world goes cold and hungry now an' then."

"Most men don't think that," stated Mrs. Moffett firmly.

"Well, I'll be going on. If I'm going to reach this Magdalena, I'd better be setting out. Maybe I won't go so far—maybe I'll strike some place on the way where they'll need a good man, strong an' willing to do any kind of work?" There was a slight upward inflection in his voice that seemed to indicate a faint hope that this might be such a place. But Mrs. Moffett had relapsed into gloomy taciturnity.

"I dunno," she answered.

"Might I make so bold as to ask your name, ma'am? I'd like to be thinking of it kindly an' thankfully from time to time."

"Name's Moffett." The lady clipped the words as short as possible. She did not seem fond of the sound of the name for which she had exchanged that one to which she had been born.

"Well, ma'am, mine's Lynch—Dennis Lynch. I'd like to think that some day I might be giving you a cup of tea at a place of my own. But if that doesn't come to pass, remember that I'll always be thinking kindly of you. I'm glad I took the wrong trail, for—if you'll believe me, ma'am—you're the first person that's done me a kindness since I slipped off the box car at Copper Junction, three days ago."

"I believe you," replied Mrs. Moffett dryly.

Mr. Lynch, resuming his little bundle,

skirted Ed Moffett's domestic-animal corral, and plodded along the dusty trail. And Mrs. Moffett, with her unilluminated, sallow face, went back from the kitchen door and began washing dishes again.

From time to time, as she washed, her gaze traveled through the kitchen window to the patch of bare land surrounded by the picket fence. She looked no more bleak, no more bitter, when she surveyed that plot of earth than at all other time; hers was an absolute bleakness and bitterness, incapable, it seemed, of any crescendo or diminuendo. Nevertheless, as she looked upon that patch of ground, she looked upon the visible monument of the death of all her hope, all her aspiration, all her gladness.

Sixteen years before, Ed Moffett had surrounded that square with a picket fence and had painted it green. Within the inclosure, Gracie was to wrest a miracle from the arid New Mexican soil—she was to have a garden, like the one "back home." Behind a trunk in an outside storehouse were hidden the books and pamphlets that she had brought out with her to help her in working that miracle. She had not looked at them in all the years since she had definitely abandoned her intention, and had told herself in her heart that she hated gardens. But she was keenly conscious of them every day of her life. She never forgot the hopes with which she had come out to Juanita Valley, and remembering them was the bitterest drop in all the cup of acid that she drank each day.

Ed had left the Illinois town in which they had both been born, and had settled in New Mexico, five years before he had been able to come back home and marry Gracie. Gracie, meantime, had expended her energies happily upon the collection of a famous linen chest and of a modest bank account. She had been bright-eyed then, smiling, expect-

ant of happiness. She had known that Ed would be successful; Ed, handsome, hustling, domineering, was the very material out of which success was made. And in those days success had seemed a beautiful thing to her.

She had not been daunted by tales of the loneliness of the region to which she was going. Would she not have Ed, and by and by Ed's children, to bear her company? Would she not have manifold occupations—a house to keep in a region where housekeeping was not so easy as in the long-settled little village close to the railroad, where all her days had been spent? Would she not have a garden to force out of the forbidding sands of the desert? It could be done—Ed had assured her it could be done, that it had been done by a Mrs. Jenkins down the valley. What any Mrs. Jenkins could do, she, Gracie, could do more splendidly—that was Ed's proud assurance to her.

And then she would have new accomplishments to learn—horseback riding, for example. She had thrilled to think of that in her vigorous youth back there, and she had laboriously constructed two riding habits—a cloth one and a linen one—for herself, from paper patterns. It was going to be a delicious way to get about the country—so much more fun than trolleys, trains, and buggies!

And then there were new friends to make. Distances were great, but hospitality was rampant all up and down the valley, Ed had assured her. Mounted on a swift, little broncho, she would count ten miles no more than one at home. And there were new wild flowers to be learned, and photographs to be taken wherewith to stir the wonder of the "folks back home."

All that had been in her dreams for the five years of Ed's absence. All that had been in her dreams when finally he had come back to claim her—a little handsomer, a little more hustling, a little more domineering, than when he had



Copper Junction, and Gracie had been proud and elated to see how deferentially all the little frontier town treated her husband. Why, he was a big man! He was a successful man! The bank wanted to make him a director; the Kansas City beef concerns wanted to make contracts with him for enormous deliveries—or so he had given Gracie to understand. Prospectors wanted him to stake them for exploring expeditions here and there throughout the territory; the cattlemen wanted to make him

gone away. She had been faintly disturbed by the subtle change in him; she had almost perceived something hard, something coarse, in the accentuation of all his early traits. But she had been in love with him, she had been waiting for him. She had stilled the question that had kept rising in her mind, she had married him, and they had set out for the new land of promise.

For a month it had all been as delightful as he had promised her it should be. They had stayed at the hotel at



There had been horsemen waiting for them at intervals along the road.

president of their local association. This last honor was authenticated by something more than Ed's assertion, for he was actually made the president.

They had spent the first week happily, receiving their freight from back East—the parlor organ, the hand-painted lamp, the plush "parlor suite," the silver-plated ice-water pitcher, the crayon portraits of her father and mother, and all the dear treasures with which she had purposed to make the adobe house in the wilderness as like as possible to the frame house under the maples in Illinois. They had purchased stores on a scale that had seemed to Gracie, accustomed as she was to a hasty trip to the corner grocery whenever the larder needed replenishing, fairly stupendous. How wonderful it was going to be to live in a place where there could be no hasty running out in the afternoon to repair the omission of the morning order! She had made the most exhaustive lists and had taken a keen delight in seeing them filled at the great camp-provisioning center in Copper Junction.

They had started up the valley on one of Sam Dunkelman's stages, which made the trip once a week. Up home, Ed had told her, there was waiting for her a well-broken little pony—a pinto that, he declared, could do everything but talk. And Gracie had had delicious flurries of trepidation at the thought of learning to ride, even under Ed's tutelage. Driving she understood, but riding would be a new delight. And the progress up the valley had been almost triumphal; every one had tried to persuade them to spend the night; there had been horsemen waiting for them at intervals along the road, who claimed to have received the sternest instructions from their better halves to insist upon Mr. and Mrs. Moffett's leaving the trail and coming a mile or so back with them, to dinner, or supper, or whatever the meal might be.

And it had not occurred to Gracie, then, that with all this friendly interest, this almost overpowering hospitality, there had been mingled a sort of feverish curiosity. She had recognized that these people were curious to see her—but that was pardonable. All the world is always curious to see a bride. She had felt no misgiving as to the nature of their interest.

Then she had gone home and had exclaimed over the adobe house that Ed had built, and over the marvelous conveniences that he had succeeded in installing, even out there in the wilderness, and over the view, which she had declared made her think of the colored pictures of Palestine in the old Sunday-school room back home, and over the garden that she was to have, and over everything.

And then one day the face of the world had been changed for her. Gladness and hope and expectancy had been killed in her. Ed had gone off, riding the range in search of some stray cattle, and old Mrs. Carpenter, harsh-voiced, harsh-featured, had come down a matter of fourteen miles, to spend the day with the lonely bride. Mrs. Carpenter made it her boast that she always believed in calling a spade a spade; she had proceeded to do so at once. She had also been remembering the deal in which Ed had "bested" her husband.

"Well, I think you're real sensible, myself," she had declared, cruel old eyes upon the young wife. "Lots o' girls wouldn't 'a' stood for Ed's havin' had that half-breed girl all these years, but Lor'! Men will be men, an' one's no better than another. I think you're real sensible myself."

Gracie had turned slowly and looked at her. It had taken a perceptible minute for the sense of the statement to reach her mind.

"What's that you say?" she had asked, after the words had traveled to her intelligence.

Mrs. Carpenter, nothing loath, had repeated them. And she had added: "And he never told you? Well, I don't suppose any man would have. They're all alike."

Gracie had looked at her silently for a while, and then had said: "I don't believe a word you've said, but you can't stay another minute in my house—in Ed's house. You get up an' go."

Mrs. Carpenter had reluctantly obeyed, but she had not gone without speeding further poisoned arrows. Why, any one along the whole Juanita would corroborate her! Why, Ed himself wouldn't dare deny it! He'd taken up with the girl when he hadn't been out more than a year, and he hadn't shipped her until six months before he went home to be married. She believed there'd been a child, but to that she wouldn't swear; she'd only swear to what she knew. And what she knew was that Ed Moffett had kept Annunciata Lopez for more than three years! But there wasn't any use making a rumpus about it now. Almost all the men who came out there alone did the same thing! The girls who went with them didn't expect anything but what they got. It was all they were good for, anyway, the miserable half-breeds!

"Will you get out of here?" had been Gracie's sole retort.

And Mrs. Carpenter had finally gone.

It had seemed to the girl that she could not live until Ed should return and deny the story. It was not solely the treachery to herself that had seared her very heart; it was the treachery to the other woman, too—if the unbelievable story were true! She had paced back and forth the length of the little house, her hands clenched, her eyes burning, her lips dry. She had kept telling herself that it could not be true—it could not! But suddenly all the interest of all the people along the valley had taken on a new and sinister aspect, and the subtle change in Ed had seemed

something more than the mere development of his natural tendencies with years and success and responsibility.

Ed had not returned for two days. When he had swung himself from his horse in the corral, tired, hungry, eager for his home and his wife, Gracie had come speeding out to him, a slim little thing in a pink print dress. She had held him back with strong, thin hands, already browning in the Western suns, when he had tried to kiss her. She had hurled the story at him—breathlessly, wildly—searching him with eyes that could not be deceived.

Ed had grown sullen. And then, out of his sullenness, he had blurted forth the brutal truth. Yes, it was true, what Mrs. Carpenter had told her; quite true. And there was more than that true—it was true that the girl had been common property up and down the Juanita before he had come; and that he had saved her from an uglier lot yet than that to which he had condemned her; and that he had provided for her when he was through with her. And what was she, Gracie, going to do about it?

For a few minutes she had not known what she was going to do about it. A thought of home had occurred to her, but she had shuddered away from that. Pride would never let her go back there to the maple-lined village and admit herself deceived. She had thought of Copper Junction—of work there. She could work, she was accustomed to it. She could earn her own living. She need not be beholden to this traitor. But that would be to let the whole valley know how she had been duped, how brief had been her little illusion of happiness.

"I'm not going to do anything about it," she had told him, with a sudden flare of anger. "Not a thing. I'm going to stay right here an' keep your house, an' I'm going to turn any one out of it who dares to say a word to me like that Carpenter woman said. But

I'm never going to have anything to do with these people again as long as I live, or with you either, Ed Moffett."

She had looked him directly in the eyes, and there had been no mistaking her meaning or the sincerity of her purpose. Ed, with masculine blindness, had been infinitely relieved that there was to be no public scandal, no broken home. His pride was scarcely less than hers. As for her threat—of course, she was "mad"! Confound that old Carpenter cat! But she'd get over it by and by, Gracie would; women always did. They had to, poor things! He'd be extra good to her—she'd soon come round! And, tired as he had been, he had begun to spade her garden plot that very evening. She had come out to him wearing the grim look that had deepened every year since.

"You needn't do that," she had told him. "I shan't plant a thing."

And though Ed, disbelieving, had spaded the whole patch for her, she had kept her word. Not a seed had she ever sown; never once had she used the little irrigation ditch he had diverted from his main line to make her garden blossom like the one back home.

She had kept her word heroically. She had been talkative enough as a girl, but she had developed amazing powers of taciturnity with the passing years. She had been a neighborly creature in her youth, but she practiced no hospitality now, save that which Ed's new money-making scheme forced upon her. And if she had had any impulses toward softness or kindness in all these years when she had dwelt in the adobe house, almost never traveling away from it in either direction, and then driving grimly alone or as a passenger in Sam Dunkelman's stage, she had carefully refrained from showing them. Why she had now been moved by the wistful look in Dennis Lynch's eyes, the uncertain, appealing quality of his voice, she did not know; she thought it was

because he was so complete a contrast to Ed, assured, powerful, brutally successful.

About three months after her brief colloquy with the traveler, she heard her husband talking one evening to a man who had paused overnight on his way north from Copper Junction. Grace had placed their supper before them on the kitchen table; she never sat down with any of them. She lived a life more isolated than that of a servant in her husband's house. Long years ago the travelers had ceased to beg her, embarrassedly, to sit down with them. They all ignored her now as completely as she ignored everything about them except their need of food. To-night the men were talking about a newcomer who had staked a claim twenty miles to the north—a queer fellow, they said; almost "dotty," as they put it.

"It seems he's never had no luck nowhere," declared Dick Kimball with a profusion of negatives. "An' just after he'd come there, what happened but that he got a little money left him by some relative back East, or in the old country, or somewhere. And do you know what he says he's goin' to do with it?"

"No, I don't," answered Ed between mouthfuls.

"He's goin' to bring in sheep," declared Kimball weightily.

Ed's mouth, open for mastication, remained open from sheer astonishment. Finally it closed upon a vigorous "No!"

But Kimball's information had come pretty directly. He was able to give even the date of the order that the newcomer had sent to England or Australia—Dick wasn't quite sure which—for the kind of stock he wished to establish. Mrs. Moffett, moving around in her silent, antagonistic way, listened. Of course, she knew well enough what the tenor of the remarks would be; of course, any man who dared to introduce

sheep into this cattle country would be run out in short order!

"Somebody's got to tell him he can't do it, if he's such a natural-born fool he don't know it himself!" cried Ed Moffett, thumping the table, his full, bearded face red with anger.

"I knowed that was what you'd say, Ed," thin, little, leathery Kimball commended him.

"I guess I'm the best one to do it," said Ed. "I'll ride up there an' give him due warnin'. An' he can have them sheep he's ordered cut up into mutton chops where they land! I'll ride over to-morrow."

But Dick, coughing nervously behind his hand, shook his head meaningly. A gaze directed upon Mrs. Moffett showed that Dick felt some hesitation in stating his objection to Ed's plan before Ed's wife. But Ed had not lived nearly sixteen years of bitter hostility with Gracie to feel any compunctions about hurting her ears now with anything.

"Go on!" he commanded the reticent Mr. Kimball.

Gracie, watching them with a cold remoteness that was more contemptuous than a sneer, saw their heads inclined toward each other, heard the thin rattle of Dick Kimball's voice, caught a word here and there as she moved about. It



She hurled the story at him—breathlessly, wildly—searching him with eyes that could not be deceived.

was not until she heard Ed's deep voice rumble out in astonishment: "Married her, you say! Married her?" that she felt the slightest interest. She turned rather sharply then, in time to see Dick nodding a violent assent. Ed sank back in the chair and stared at the smaller man. Finally he ejaculated:

"Well, you'd better be the one to go, then. But make it clear to him—there ain't no sheep goin' to be allowed in the Juanita Valley." And then, after a little pause: "Married her!"

For the first time within the memory of the valley, Grace Moffett followed one of her husband's guests away from the kitchen table, out of the door, and into the corral, where he had left his horses. In his later narratives of the event, Dick Kimball represented himself as brilliant and heroic, as meeting Mrs. Moffett's advances with bare civility, as answering her questions briefly, unembarrassedly, directly, and as finally reading her a terse lecture on the subservency of wives.

As a matter of fact, Dick had been rendered almost speechless by Gracie's descent upon him, and had been stutteringly, wild and vague in his answers to her questions. But instinct supplied the woman with what the stammering man was unable to tell her. She learned that the stranger whom she had succored the other day, the mild-eyed, simple-hearted, luckless traveler, had made his next stop about thirty miles above the Moffett's ranch, at Annunciata Lopez's place; that he had there fallen ill, and that Annunciata had nursed him in a kind, slovenly, ignorant way; that nature had triumphed over the inadequacies of the Mexican woman's medical regimen, and that Dennis had slowly recovered.

And just as he had been gaining strength enough to talk once more of pushing on toward the mines at Magdalena, Sam Dunkelman's stage, stopping to leave pork and yeast, powder and flour at Annunciata's, had also yielded, very casually—as a sort of afterthought occurring to Sam when he was ready to push on into the northern fastnesses of the hills—a much-traveled letter, directed to Mr. Dennis Lynch. It had followed him over a great part of the United States. It was from some hamlet in County Clare, Ireland, and it told poor, wandering Dennis that he was heir to a somewhat miserly uncle's little holdings.

And what had the kind, soft-hearted

fool done—the adjectives are those of the inhabitants of the Juanita Valley when they heard the tale—but offer to marry Annunciata? Annunciata, a primitive person, untroubled with the conscientious scruples that would have beset the past-ridden heroine of a problem novel, had accepted him with tears of gratitude. She had explained pathetically that she wanted her little girl to be raised "niz," and to escape the pitfalls into which Annunciata herself had fallen. She had perceived, with experienced, though quite unembittered, perception, that the chances for raising a girl "niz" in that neighborhood were very much greater when the household boasted a father upon the premises.

All this Grace Moffett, standing out in the corral, the New Mexican sun beating relentlessly upon her head, learned from the halting speech and the pregnant stoppages of Dick Kimball.

"An' by the Lord Harry," said Dick in reporting the affair to Juanita Valley—he had rather an Elizabethan taste in expletives—"if she didn't look to me like she liked him for doin' it! Women is queer! I thought I knowed them fore an' aft. I thought I knowed that Mrs. Moffett would sooner pull the hair out of Annunciata Lopez's head than eat vittles, if she only dared! Ain't they all jealous of one another, women? Don't they naturally despise their men's old sweethearts? An' ain't Mis' Moffett had good reason to hate Annunciata? Not since she come—I don't mean that—but women holds in a spite so long!

"But she kinder looked as though she was pleased with that news I gave her. An' when I said that the poor fool talked about bringin' sheep into the valley, she just looked at me, sorter dry-like, an' said: 'Well, don't all you cattlemen know that this valley's a lot better for sheep than for cows? Ain't I heard you admit that a hundred times when you were a-growlin' an' a-grum-

blin' about things.' An' I says to her, 'But what we got is cattle an' we ain't goin' to let any half-witted outsider come in here with sheep an' spoil the range for our cows. Your husband, ma'am, Ed Moffett—he's give the word.' That's what I said to her."

Mrs. Moffett never gave the valley her version of her conversation with Mr. Kimball. Neither did she confide in any one what passed between her and Annunciata Lynch, born Lopez, when, on the day following Dick's disclosures, she hitched her one driving horse to her rattletrap buckboard and set out for the first time to see her husband's light-of-love.

Behind that sere brow what thoughts may have raged, behind those grim, set lips what emotional words may have burned, no one could possibly have guessed. Grace had merely announced, in the briefest possible manner, that Ed's dinner and supper were to be found on the shelf above the kitchen stove and in the pantry, and that she herself would probably not be back until the following forenoon. Her husband had stared at her, open-mouthed, as she had made her announcement. But no speech had come to him. There was that in Gracie's weathered, emotionless face which quenched the possibility of speech on his part.

Along the winding trail beside the Juanita, she drove all the morning, the blue blaze of sky above her, the limitless reaches, dun and dusty in the distance, but flaming to the closer vision with low-growing, gorgeous blooms, reaching before her. She saw a deer break from some cover along the horizon and leap, a flying form against the bright sky. Her eyes followed it as long as it made its streaklike flight, and there was in her heart something that had not stirred there since that journey she had made as a bride—some sentiment of pleasure, of breathlessness, at

the sight of new and wonderful things; some sense of freedom, of vastness.

By and by she came to Annunciata's hut. She did not need to ask if it were Annunciata's, for her friend, the simple-minded traveler, sat before it, beneath a cottonwood, smoking a pipe and looking wistfully toward the mountains.

"If it ain't Mis' Moffett!" he cried, with an air of pleasure, springing to his feet and approaching her woeful trap. Then his face clouded. "I've already had a message from your husband this week, ma'am," he added.

"I ain't bringin' a message from my husband," answered Gracie briefly. "I'm here on my own hook. Is it true that you—that you—and—her——" She nodded toward the hut as if the gay calico curtains blowing in the window were Annunciata in the flesh.

"Are married? Yes, ma'am." Dennis looked at her mildly. "She was very good to me—she saved my life, in a manner of speaking, an' it seemed a way of paying her. Besides, she's a gentle, kind, loving sort of woman, an' I took to her. There's no harm in Annunciata, ma'am, whatever she may have done or not done."

Gracie looked at him a long time. She nodded her head.

"I want to see her," she said finally, and Dennis led the way into the cabin. As they went he spoke.

"I wish you'd say to your husband, ma'am, that my sheep are already ordered, already on the way, an' that I don't find nothing in the laws of this country against sheep, for all the message I got from him. They tell me he's the leading man hereabouts for cows. Well, he must know, if he's a good cattleman, that this valley is made for sheep—made for them! An', sure, there's enough grass an' to spare for all the creatures——"

But Annunciata's appearance finished his statement.

"Annie," he said affectionately, laying



a hand upon the plump shoulder of the big, childlike woman who gazed at Gracie out of eyes of melting midnight and greeted her in a voice of liquid silver, "this is the lady down the trail that was good to me. She wants to see you."

Then, with instinctive delicacy, he went out to his station beneath the cottonwood, and the two women were left together. And though all Juanita Valley speculated imaginatively, hungrily, upon their discourse, the only one who had any facts upon which to base speculation was Ed Moffett.

Ed, albeit not given to the futile and time-wearing occupation of analyzing other people's methods, was worried and puzzled by his wife's departure from home. The next forenoon, when he saw her alight from the seat of the dusty rig to let down the bars of the corral, he had a sensation of relief that astonished him. He ran from the kitchen, in which he happened to be, to unharness the pony.

"Got back, have you?" he growled gruffly, unbuckling leathers and not looking at her.

"Yes," replied Gracie briefly, as was her wont. "Hold on a minute, Ed Moffett. I got somethin' to say to you."

She faced him. His heart sank like lead. Where had she been? What had she done? Had she at last, after all these years, decided to leave him? Had she arranged to go back East? His alarmed pride choked him. Habit, even the habit of hatred, as he would have called it, made him wet and cold with fright. He was breathless with sheer fear, watching her. But he could tell nothing by her face. It was whiter than usual, and she moistened her dry lips with her tongue. Otherwise there was no sign of nervousness upon her.

"I've been up there to Annuciata Lopez's," she announced colorlessly. Ed dropped a trace from nerveless fingers.

"I wanted to make sure that what that

little numskull of a Kimball said was so—to make sure that the kind traveler had married her."

"The kind traveler?" echoed Ed stupidly, his clumsy mind fixed upon the one feature of her narrative in which he had no interest. She nodded.

"Yes—he stopped here for directions one day—an' food. He'd always had a hard time, never had any luck. I kinder liked him, he was so sorter helpless—an'—an'—kind—I dunno no other word. Well, he's married her. An' he's got a little money. It was all true, what Dick Kimball said. Him that never had any luck, him that was used to hard knocks—it was him that knew how to be kind." She seemed to ponder for a moment upon some dimly discerned truth of philosophy. Then she became brisk and practical again. "An' you've sent word to him that you'll run him an' his sheep out of this valley, he tells me."

"That's right," returned Ed, picking up his fallen trace. "That's what I told Dick to tell him, an' that's what I meant."

"Uh huh," said Grace soberly. Then she straightened her thin figure. "Look here at me, Ed Moffett!" she commanded. He looked. "Look hard. I want you to know I mean what I say. You let that man an' his sheep alone—you an' all you cowmen of the Juanita Range! D'you hear me? You know that this is good sheep land, better for sheep than for cows. Don't be a pig-headed fool, then—get rid of your cows an' bring in sheep yourselves. This man—this Lynch—he understands sheep—he's been brought up with them. You'll do better for yourselves in the end."

"But—anyway—you leave him an' his sheep alone, d'you hear? I've got the right to tell you to do it! I'm the woman you brought out here to be a laughin'stock—a laughin'stock for the valley—I'm the poor, innocent fool! Well, they had their laugh at me, an'

much good may it do them! But—I got the right to somethin' from you—an' I tell you to leave that man alone—that man that's—that's—made a decent woman out of what you an' the likes of you had—made common an' filthy! You do what I say!"

She broke off chokingly.

"You tend to your own affairs," said Ed, when astonishment and some other emotion at last permitted him to speak. "I'll manage mine."

"All right," replied Grace curtly. "Only—the day you do anythin' against that Lynch man, or his sheep—that day I'm goin' to join him an' her. You hear me? I mean it. Join her—join your—leavin's! It's right that all those you work against should huddle together. It's right that the women you've disgraced should hang together. An'"—her voice rang triumphantly—"there ain't nothin' I could do that would mark you so with shame! You'd never hold your head up in the valley again!"

She turned and walked into the house. When Ed came in half an hour later, she was wearing her dingy old wrapper again, and there was no expression on her face as she dished his dinner on to the kitchen table. She did not even steal curious glances at him; evidently she was indifferent, almost, as to his actions. She had made her own irrevocable resolution. Ed's heart was heavy. He did not know why her departure to the cabin of Annunciata would be the unbearable degradation of his manhood—but he knew that it would be so. He knew that he could never again face his fellows, should his wife, no matter on what dreary terms they had lived, do that unspeakable thing. If she had only threatened to go back home! And yet, dully piercing his thick imagination, was the thought of fifteen years— She had the right to name her terms.

Two days later he said to her suddenly: "There's a good deal in what

you say about this grass of the valley bein' a sheep grass even more'n a cow grass. I've talked with Kimball an' one or two others. We didn't get no kind of prices last season for our steers, anyway—the packers is robbers. There might be more in mutton——"

"You're right about the sheep," she said. They stood opposite each other, eyes not meeting. Finally she broke the constrained silence. "Ed," she said, "I've been thinkin'—I've been thinkin' I'd like—to try that garden, if you could—spade it up again for me."

Now his eyes met hers, were on hers.

"Grace?" he stammered.

"Oh, Ed!" she cried, crumpling upon the kitchen table with a sudden burst of tears. "I've been wrong, too—all these years—so hard an' unforgivin'! An'—an'—she says—the Mexican woman—that the little girl——"

"I could have told you that fifteen years ago, if you'd asked me!" interrupted Ed, righteous and aggrieved at last. "It was when I found out that she—wasn't on the level with me, either—that I couldn't get back quick enough to you. It was that that sickened me of her an' all she stood for. Oh, I was a bad lot—but I wasn't as bad as you thought—if you'd only given me a chance to say so!"

Across the wasted, hard years they looked at each other. Speech quivered almost upon their lips—truths to be told of patience and love and forgiveness. But they were awkward with words. Only, as the rankling, corroding sense of wrong seemed to dissolve in each bosom, Grace said again: "You'll spade up the patch for me? Will you, Ed?" And he answered gruffly: "Of course!"

And then, jogging along the trail beyond their fenced-in house acre, they saw a pathetic figure riding down toward Copper and its sheep—mild-eyed, simple-hearted Dennis Lynch.

"The kind traveler," sobbed Grace.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS

By

Leigh Gordon Giltner



ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

THE thriving little city of Livingston was wont to plume itself upon its metropolitan aplomb and its cosmopolitan indifference to individual eccentricity. Yet it is doubtful whether even sophisticated Chicago or blasé Manhattan would have failed to "sit up," had its leading hostelry formed the stage setting for the unique little drama enacted at the Imperial, the local Ritz-Carlton.

Dinner was being served in the main dining room. The lobby was crowded with traveling salesmen, theatrical advance agents, reporters, writers on turf-and-track topics, local and visiting horsemen, in town for the annual mid-winter horse sales for which this Southern city was famous. The mezzanine floor was thronged with richly dressed women awaiting their escorts, theater parties from the outside, and feminine guests of the house. The big, modern hostelry was at its busiest, gayest, and best at this evening hour of relaxation and social intercourse—when there was a slight stir in the lobby below, a stir that widened into a ripple which spread

until office, corridors, dining room, grill, and mezzanine were all alert and agog with curiosity.

From the elevator that had just paused at the office floor had stepped a figure sufficiently conspicuous to have arrested attention under any circumstances, but doubly striking in this in-harmonious and incongruous setting. It was the figure of a slender young girl, very young, very much frightened and bewildered, and startlingly pretty—in itself sufficient to have enlisted the interests of the masculine bystanders. But added thereto was the fact that the girl was in full and festive bridal array, from trailing white satin gown, dainty slippers, shower bouquet, and point-lace fan to the orange blossoms that held in place the long tulle bridal veil.

For an instant she stood, hesitant, uncertain, bewildered, the cynosure of all eyes. Then she turned toward the dining room, where an amazed but able and affable head waiter met and parleyed with her. For a long, pregnant moment she stood poised in the doorway, all eyes upon her, her own eager

gaze roaming searchingly over the groups of startled diners. Then, convinced that the object of her quest was not in sight, she turned and swept, in all the bravery of her bridal finery, across the lobby, followed by glances shocked, startled, or skeptical, according to the temperament and traditions of the gazer.

Certain Eastern visitors to the city were secretly quite sure that this was some new cabaret stunt, and confidently expected the supposed bride elect to burst into a ragtime strain and do a tango for the entertainment of the assembly. Among the less sophisticated and up to date eyes bulged and lips parted in stunned surprise. Bell boys, laden with suit cases or ice pitchers, halted and stood agape. Well-bred women on the mezzanine floor above leaned over the railing, craning their pretty necks to follow the movements of this damsel in distress, for whom the lobby loungers made respectful way as she approached the desk.

An embarrassed clerk courteously answered her inquiries.

No, there had been no message, wire, or letter for Miss Mazie Hendricks; no, he hadn't the pleasure of knowing personally one Mr. D. G. Elliott, of Elliott & Wells, stock-and-real-estate brokers; no, he was not acquainted with any such firm in Livingston; yes, certainly, any message would be sent up promptly, and he himself would see that she was instantly notified in case any one should call for her.

The girl turned, in evident uncertainty and dismay. Those nearest could see that her beautiful blue eyes were filled with tears and that her lips were quivering, despite her efforts at control. She was pathetically young and helpless, and so exceptionally lovely that the chivalrous instinct that inheres in every man was touched. The situation was palpable and painful. Men averted their eyes or glanced at each other in

understanding and sympathy. "Dupe and deceiver," coupled with "scoundrel," "cad," and "villain," were the unanimous, if unvoiced, masculine comments, while the women on the floor above, beginning to grasp the situation, wondered loftily at the credulity of certain of their sex.

After a moment the girl entered the elevator, leaving it at the mezzanine floor, to take up again her unavailing search. It was unspeakably pathetic; the situation was so plain, the girl's face so tragic in its disappointment, fear, and dismay, that one or two of the elder ladies present were tempted to join her and essay to comfort her. But the chains of convention are strong, and the average woman dreads rendering herself conspicuous.

Up and down the length of the brilliantly lighted mezzanine wandered the searcher, until presently a tactful young woman employee of the establishment—doubtless at the managerial suggestion—approached and addressed her.

In her distress, the girl promptly told her story, which was overheard by an interested and constantly increasing audience. Her name, it appeared, was Mazie Hendricks, her home a small town in western Iowa. She had been sufficiently interested in the circular of a firm of Livingston stock-and-real-estate brokers to invest half her small capital in certain suggested speculations; a correspondence had sprung up between her and the senior member of this firm; photographs had been exchanged; and presently an engagement had resulted. Then it had been arranged that the girl should come on to Livingston, and there be married to young Elliott, whose business engagements prevented his going on to claim his bride.

"I called him this afternoon as soon as I got in," sobbed the girl hysterically, "and he promised to meet me here at seven—with a minister. We

were to be married immediately in the presence of his family and a few friends. But it's past eight already—and he—hasn't come! I can't find him—he doesn't answer his office telephone. I don't know what to do!"

A tall, handsome, elderly man, with a strong, clean-shaven face and iron-gray hair, rose from his seat at a neighboring writing desk, and advanced respectfully.

"I beg your pardon," he said courte-

perhaps I can ascertain the house address of your fiancé."

"Thank you, thank you so much!" breathed the girl tremulously. "But please mayn't I just stay here while you call? I'm so anxious, so troubled—There's surely some dreadful mistake— Oh, please let me stay and hear what's delaying Dallas!"

"As you like, of course, my dear young lady," the big man assented gently.



"I beg your pardon," he said courteously, "but I couldn't help overhearing what you were saying to Miss Stephens."

ously, "but I couldn't help overhearing what you were saying to Miss Stephens, and I beg that you'll allow me to be of use. I'm a frequent guest here and Miss Stephens will vouch for me. There has evidently been some misunderstanding as to arrangements. If you will go to your room, I'll take up the matter for you. I have a young daughter of about your age, and the thought of her makes it a pleasure for me to assist other young ladies. I'll call 'Information' on the telephone, and

He was a kindly person, and evidently as capable as kind. In an instant he was calling "Information" on the nearest house phone, while a bell boy sought a city directory. Followed ten long minutes of suspense, during which the beauty and forlornness of the girl and her piteous plight won for her the sympathy of every woman present, while a number of men from below, who had made various more or less plausible errands to the mezzanine—sensing a case of base duplicity on the

one hand and of youthful credulity on the other—were ready to enlist, at a moment's notice, in the service of the deceived and deserted damsel. Then the girl's new-found champion turned, and reluctantly met her pleading gaze.

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Hendricks," he said apologetically, "but the name of D. C. Elliott does not appear in either the directory or the telephone list, and "Information" tells me they have no such subscriber. Nor is his firm name given. There is evidently some serious mistake——"

The girl stood staring at him in growing horror and amaze for an instant. Then, as full comprehension of her plight dawned upon her, she wavered slightly, went very white, and, with a little choking moan, crumpled down in a faint at his feet. Instantly the group was surrounded. Chambermaids, guests, hallboys, proprietor, clerks, and housekeeper gathered in a panic. The gray-haired man who had espoused her cause stooped and lifted the fainting figure in his strong arms.

"Stand back!" he ordered authoritatively. "The girl must have air. Don't you see you're stifling her? Call the house physician—quick!"

Then a queer thing happened: The fainting girl suddenly opened her eyes, wriggled from the grasp of the startled good Samaritan, and, with a sudden bound, stood upright. As she rose and made for the lift, the air was suddenly filled with a veritable snowstorm of small white cards, bearing the legend:

C. R. ERDMANN & CO.,

Ladies' Outfitters,

311 WEST MAIN STREET.

LIVINGSTON, KY.

The costumes worn by Miss Verna Lascelles in her clever skit "Orange Blossoms" at the Vendome all this week furnished by Erdmann & Co.

Before the assembly recovered from its stunned surprise, the girl had descended in the elevator and hurried across the lobby, out into the street, and into a waiting taxi, which got into motion without an instant's loss of time.

The Livingston *Herald* next morning contained the following illuminative item:

One of the cleverest double-barreled advertising schemes ever put over on a confiding public was pulled off last evening at a leading Livingston hostelry, when a pretty young comedienne playing in a local variety theater appeared in full bridal array at the hotel in the rôle of a deserted bride in quest of the youth she had "come on from Iowa to marry," who had discreetly disappeared at the crucial moment. Before a thrilled audience of guests and employees, the young woman did a successful "faint" when advised of her lover's defection, recovering to distribute the business cards of a local firm of ladies' outfitters, who are costuming her vaudeville sketch. Before management and guests recovered from their surprise, the young woman had escaped in a taxi, and ten minutes later was doing her turn at the above-mentioned variety house, where she will play throughout the week—doubtless to capacity houses. The *Herald* does not, as a rule, fall for free advertising schemes, but this particular stunt was so clever and unique in conception and execution as to assume the proportions of a news item. As such it is offered to our readers.



Beginnings

• A STORY OF THE OHIO FLOODS

By Frances E. Gale

Author of "A Gradle Singer," "Pemberton's Decision," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. A. SHAFER.

THE office boy closed the door and left Marion Ray facing the owner and editor of *Lang's Monthly Magazine*. Dummy pages were spread upon the desk before him, shears, paste pot, and ruler temporarily anchored scattered heaps of proofs, a little mountain of manuscripts lifted appealing titles at one side, and a pile of letters at the other awaited perusal.

It was Harvey Lang's busy morning, and although he rose, quickly and courteously, his worried frown drew the rumpled, gray-streaked shock of hair closer to his thick glasses, and there was an edge of anxious impatience in his voice as he asked:

"Steven not coming down to-day?"

Mrs. Ray rested her small, gray-gloved hands upon the back of the chair opposite the publisher's great, loose-limbed, carelessly garbed figure, and raised dark, shadow-encircled eyes. Her attitude unconsciously suggested entreaty, almost prayer, and Lang hastily shifted his glance from hers as he motioned her to sit down. She did so, pausing a moment before saying, in a voice the quality of which had in it something of the appeal of a timidly trustful child:

"Will it inconvenience you very much if he stays at home another day? By Monday I'm sure he'll be well enough to come to work."

"Well," the publisher said, "this is

Saturday, and all this stuff"—he included in a comprehensive motion the various heaps of proof before him—"has to be in the printers' hands by Tuesday morning." He cleared his throat. "I don't see, I honestly don't see how we can go on with this thing much longer, Mrs. Ray."

"Do you mean you won't keep him?"

There was no resentment in her tone; rather acceptance of a familiar and hopeless situation. Lang countered, throwing himself back in his swivel chair and thrusting his hands deep in his pockets.

"Does he get any better?" he asked

Mrs. Ray did not answer the question. She spoke presently, as if thinking aloud:

"I had let myself hope once more. There seemed such a chance for him here, and you've been so kind. Well, the end has come again."

There were tears neither in her eyes nor in her voice, but the despair in both shattered the self-control of the man before her. He sprang to his feet, pushing his chair back violently, and strode to the window, returning to lean one clenched hand heavily upon the desk.

"How in the name of Heaven," he demanded slowly, "does any man account to himself for dragging another human being after him through such misery as your life must have been? If he were alone, one might understand it. If a

man chooses to go to the devil himself, it's his privilege. But with a wife!"

Mrs. Ray met his eyes, her own slowly gathering reflections from long years of striving to find the answer to this very question.

"He doesn't account for it," she said at last. "He's driven by something outside himself, outside his true self. There are forces in him that we don't understand. When I try to do so, I only irritate him. I only know that he sees something that I don't see and don't understand the importance of. The little success he has had with his poetry would have satisfied some men, and they'd have worked steadily at something else for a living, but he's different. He longs so for wide appreciation, and every rebuff makes him so unhappy. Then, to forget, he turns to what his father turned to before him. The habit is an inherited one, but the temptation for him is greater. He has the artistic temperament. I don't understand it, but it's real, and when it can't find its natural outlet, it turns into wrong channels."

"Artistic rubbish!" Lang exploded. "It's one-half damned selfishness and the other half love of whisky. Marion, why don't you leave him? There's many a brute would turn decent if the woman who was sheltering him would pull out for a while and let him shift for himself. Because you keep telling people that he's all right, and because, for your sake, I let him hold his job here, Steve more than half believes that he's doing the straight thing by both of us. By George! Sometimes I think he regards himself as quite a superior being! If he were left alone long enough to be found out, he'd see himself in other people's eyes instead of yours, and wilt like a slit balloon. Look here! Why don't you take your sister's offer for a year? It's good work—fine work. It appeals to you. If Steven straightened up, you could come back to him. If not, you

would have a life in which you would really be accomplishing something. If you haven't enough money, I'll lend you whatever you need. Come, be a sport!"

He smiled whimsically; then went on, in a voice that rasped:

"God knows I don't want you to go so far away, but I want you to be out of that man's grip. How long have you been in it? Fifteen years! Think of it! And I don't suppose that during twelve of them you've known a really easy hour. It'd be like the beginning of a new life for you to get away."

The intensity of his earnestness seemed to scatter the ashes from some smoldering fire heretofore hidden within her breast.

"A beginning!" she breathed, only half audibly. "A new beginning!" Then, with an energy that, as she went on, waxed almost to fierceness: "Twelve years of watching and terror, you say! It was fourteen years ago yesterday when we made our first 'new beginning,' just one year after I went to him. He'd spent every cent we'd laid away for the home we were to build. No one knew but me, and I hid it and believed him when he said we'd start afresh and he'd be trustworthy in future. It wasn't six months before everything was swept away again, and he'd lost his situation. Then I knew I could never trust him, but we moved to another place and got together another home.

"Over and over again it happened, and over and over again he would say: 'We'll make a fresh start. It'll never happen again.' But I learned to set up no household gods. The homes I made I kept well—oh, I did my part, always—but I didn't dare to love them. Sometimes a year would go by safely, as it did the first year we came back here, and then I'd begin to hope, but it would always be followed by a succession of shorter intervals that would leave us

penniless, facing a new beginning. Yet he's so clever that he can always get employment, and so lovable—when he's himself—that no one would believe what I've endured.

"My sister found out five years ago. He was at his worst during her visit. She was horrified and has never ceased urging me to leave him and go to her. When we came here three years ago, I prayed of him, although I knew it was useless, to call up every bit of manhood he had in him—that he mightn't disgrace himself and me in my old home, before my old friends. He promised—oh, he always promises so easily!—and he knew quite well that you took him on because of your friendship for me, not because you trusted him.

"At every lapse that has since come he has known that you've taken him back because you pitied me, because I begged it. But, Harvey, this is the last time. Never again will I intercede for him with you. I'll tell him so to-day. He's sober enough now to understand. It may be that I'll do as you say—take Bertha's offer, if—when—he breaks out again. But this one more warning let him have. This once let him come back. I don't trust him any more than you do, I feel that it's useless; but he must have his warning. It has been my life work—this building walls with sand—and I can't give it up without notice. This once more—only this once!"

Lang looked into her face across the flat desk. Her hands, clasped upon the blotter before her, trembled violently, but in her eyes was the light of rebellion, of self-declaration.

"You mean it?" he said. "You know he won't reform. You mean that you'll leave him?"

"I mean it," she said, and rose.

Lang thrust his long, muscular arms into his coat sleeves and accompanied her through the busy outer office to the elevator.

II.

When, at twenty years old, Marion Russell had married Steven Ray, there had been many disappointed candidates for the part in the ceremony which Steven had so gracefully filled; and that each had fed secretly upon some hopeful remembrance was not so much the result of the coquetry attributed to her by her own sex, as of a sincere desire on her part to hurt no one, and a natural reverence for and dependence upon masculine strength, mental and physical, which led her to find in each admirer something that she in time could admire.

When Harvey Lang, ten years her senior, had come to the Middle States town, now a prosperous little city, he had already seen something of life and of women, but at the clutch of her little hand upon his rough sleeve and the timid appeal of her deep gray eyes as he had helped her into his swaying canoe among the rushes of the Miami River, he had forgotten all other hands and eyes that had ever temporarily held him, and had known that his strength had been given him for one purpose—that of protecting this woman through life.

During all the following years he had not swerved from that conviction, although the execution of the Providence-designed plan had gone so pitifully astray. Bewilderedly he had discovered, when he had asked Marion to be his wife, that Steven Ray, handsome, talented, self-worshiping, winning the liking of all, holding the faith of none, had forestalled him. Vehemently he had contested her decision, asking her bluntly to throw his own suit aside if she would, but not to go on with this other. This man was unworthy, he told her; he would never be a prop or a defense for any woman, and she was made for leaning upon the strength, not for supporting the weakness, of others.

To his protests she had opposed a



"If a man chooses to go to the devil himself, it's his privilege. But with a wife!"

gentle stubbornness of purpose that he had not guessed in her character, a proud and tender loyalty to her lover that he could not but respect. He had been silenced, yet he felt that he had shaken her; that something from the core of his own nature had plunged to previously unfathomed depths of hers and found response.

Both men had been employed in the same concern, a struggling publishing house, trying to establish, against the competition of the East, a journal the Western appeal of which would secure a living circulation. Lang, with some metropolitan experience, inexhaustible diligence, and iron health, had been engaged to assume the business management. Ray, endowed with a spark of undeniable literary ability, and possessed of a personality so charming as

to win the confidence even of check-demanding contributors and skeptical advertisers, had been given an editorial position varied by an occasional space-selling trip.

The second of these trips had proved his unreliability. The young business manager had connected the orderless week with an unnecessarily high expense account and signs of dissipation unnoticed by eyes less sharp, and, withdrawing Ray from the road, had chained him permanently to the editorial desk. He would have dismissed him at once, but at just that time Ray's engagement to Marion had been an-

nounced, and Lang had felt it impossible to fling his successful rival into the street.

Instead, hopeless though he had been of any improvement in what he had recognized as the man's fundamental character, he had given Ray every chance, even advancing money toward the launching of a volume of verse which his common sense had told him would never bring back the cost of printing and advertising. The momentary local success and subsequent flat failure of that enterprise had given the author excuse first for an inflation of self-confidence, and then for an abysmal despair that had ended in the first "spree" he had indulged in since his marriage.

In the clutch of that horror, Marion had faced her world, head up, girlhood forgotten, a woman with a woman's fight before her. She had lied nobly to her friends, to Lang, to the employers of both men! Steven was ill; a drier climate would suit his constitution better; within sight of the Sierras he would gain material and inspiration for his work; there was an opening there that would furnish them a living until recognition found him.

They had gone. Her only relative, a married sister, had soon after moved from the town, going with her husband, a medical missionary, to open a hospital and refuge for sick and stranded adventurers on the Alaskan border.

Lang had stayed on. The monthly journal had gasped its way through two years of life and a dragging death. Lang, hampered by the dictation of men who knew nothing of the business they were engaged in, had finally shaken himself free, purchased what poor assets were left, and reorganized upon a practical basis, and in a few years had within his control a prosperous business in which he worked with an energy the very contemplation of which exhausted less strenuous men.

He did not marry, but he built a home of some dignity wherein to indulge such domestic tastes as were possible under the dominance of an elderly housekeeper relative. He mixed but moderately in the society that developed with the growth of the city. He was an enthusiastic oarsman, and in all possible weather spent most of his recreative hours upon the water. The years made him lean, steel-muscled, gray, and, after eleven of them had rolled by, Marion and Steven had come back.

At sight of her, Lang's heart had risen smotheringly in his throat. He had persuaded himself that he had forgotten. But she had stood before him—to-day linking itself with the day when he had told her what she was to him—and all the years between had become as mist.

But she had been changed, cruelly changed. Lang had noted with pitying rage that the girlish beauty which should have developed into the sweet maturity of happy matronhood had instead been refined to the delicacy of the pictured saint. As, in his gentle guidance of her steps into his boat, he had responded to her silent appeal the first day he had seen her, so now, before she could ask it of him, he had offered a position to Steven, with a salary sufficient to keep them out of want.

During the three years that had followed, Lang's patience had been tried to the breaking point many times. Ray, brilliant by flashes still, charming still to the world of occasional acquaintances, was utterly unreliable in the everyday drudgery of journalism, his conduct permeated by moods and whims, his arrogance of superior intellectuality insufferably irritating to a man who, had his private resentment not always been awake, might otherwise have been amused by it.

Again and again, an absence of a week or more from the office had been explained by Marion on the score of ill-

ness. Again and again, Lang had accepted the lie, not trusting himself to look her in the face, as he had done so, lest his indignation, not for himself, but for her, should leap his control. For the last year even a simulation of deceit between the two had been put aside. To the rest of her world Marion still presented a brave front. To the man who unwillingly fought beside her in a losing battle for what he, at least, regarded as a worthless soul, she acknowledged that her life was a wreck. Over the details of that wreckage her lips had until to-day been closed, but what he had read in her eyes had often made him writhe.

He looked down at the slender little figure beside him now, such rebellious passion in his heart as had not been there since the day when he had seen her at the altar give herself to Steven Ray, with a holy confidence that should have turned, so Lang thought, a very beast into a man.

She left him, no pretense of a smile in her farewell. A short walk brought her to the door of a flimsily built two-story apartment house, the sagging porch and great peeled patches upon the spindling white columns telling of cheap tenantry and careless ownership. Marion paused at the foot of the steps, looking toward an upper window. Then her eyes traveled over the whole shabby front, and, supplementing her new expression of resolve, came a look of positive loathing.

III.

The little flat was still, except for the purring of the cat that rubbed a welcoming head against her skirt. Before her lay the twelve-foot-square sitting room, in which tasteful arrangement and exquisite cleanliness had striven to soften the poverty of the furnishings. Two other doors opened off the slip of hall. She went to the last and stood in the doorway.

Her husband lay in bed, asleep, the coverings tossed distressfully about him, his face twitching and his arms jerking nervously. Apparently he had risen and essayed to dress during her absence, for his garments were strewn on the floor and the foot of the bed. Upon a table beside him stood a pitcher, a glass, and an empty soda-water siphon. A stream of the liquid, spilled by a shaking hand, had soaked the table cover and carpet. A tray of untasted food occupied a chair at the other side. The window shade was askew, the dressing table-disheveled. The half-open door of Marion's closet alone disclosed the refinement and orderliness of the woman who shared the evil-odored little room.

She went forward now and pulled down the window's upper sash, letting in the bleak, damp air. At the sound, Steven sprang up with a choking cry, staring, terror-eyed, for a moment, then breaking into peevish, half-sobbing words.

Where had she been the whole morning? Did it take her half a day to tell Lang that he wouldn't be down until Monday? If she had been here to get him something decent, he might have been able to eat it, but who could swallow that disgusting, cold stuff?

Marion did not remind him that the food had been hot and appetizing when placed beside him. She came to the side of the bed.

"Shall I get you some lunch, Steven? There's something I want to talk to you about. You'd better try to eat first."

"Lunch! Ugh! No. I'll get up."

He placed his feet upon the floor, steadying himself by a grasp upon her arm, but sank back, nauseated.

"I can't do it!" he whimpered. "You'll have to get me some whisky."

With an inscrutable expression, she met the cringing appeal of his eyes, then silently left the room, returning with a glass which contained a small quantity

of liquor. He seized it and gulped it down, then leaned his damp forehead against her sleeve.

"You're a good old girl, Mamie," he said. "What would I do without you?"

"Are you feeling steadier now?" she asked.

Her level tone, devoid of sympathetic response, caused Ray to lift his head and look at her uneasily.

"I'll be all right in a brace of shakes," he said swaggeringly. "It's the cursed dreams that knock me out. When you pulled that window down, I thought —" He shuddered.

"Because," Marion went on, withdrawing her arm and seating herself in a chair a yard distant, "I want you to understand quite clearly what I have to say." She paused, holding his eyes with her own. "Unless you will do something that I desire, you will have to do without me as best you can, for I will go away."

Steven stared at her, leaning sideways, propped by one arm, his face flushing.

"What do you mean?" he asked at length belligerently.

"I mean that I will never again live such a week as this last has been. You are over this—attack—now, but it's only two months since the last one, and it may be only a month till the next. You're the victim of a disease, I know. But I am your victim. Other men have been cured of that disease. If you will take that cure as they have done, I'll keep our home together some way until you come back. Then I'll be your wife again—the wife of a man. But I will no longer be the wife of—a drunkard."

The amazement in Ray's face changed to anger as she spoke.

"You'd have me go to jail—be locked up, treated as a madman or a criminal? You're a nice wife!"

"I'd have you cured of a deadly dis-

ease, Steven, if cure is still possible. It may be too late, but you must try."

"Must? And if I won't?"

"Then I will go."

"Go! Where to?"

His scoffing laugh did not conceal his startled consciousness of her sincerity.

"I'll go to Bertha. They have work in their hospital by which I can earn a living and do some good at the same time. I'm doing no good here. You're getting worse instead of better."

"So that's what your mission-study meetings have taught you! It's pleasanter to go off and nurse a lot of driftwood at the edge of civilization than to stay at home and look after the duties that belong to you! That's the quality of your religion!"

She looked at him dumbly, but the resolution in her face did not fade.

"See here," Steven went on. He reached for the water pitcher and took a long draft. "What are you talking all this nonsense for, Marion? You and I have been together for fifteen years. We've had hard luck often, but we've always pulled out. Sometimes these disappointments are too much for me, and I take a drink to forget them, and then I can't stop. But I'll hit it off yet, if you'll stick to your part. You don't understand what I go through. To work and work and do stuff that's a thousand times better than what you see published and raved over every day, and know that nothing but the ignorance or thick-headedness of some damned publisher stands between you and recognition—" His voice broke, and weak tears of self-pity rose to his eyes. "And now you say you're going to desert, going to leave me without a home when you know what home is to me! I don't believe you'd do it, old girl."

He rose, dragging a blanket about him, and stood, a pathetically undignified figure, leaning against the high foot rail. He held out a shaking hand to his wife, the ghost of his old fascination in

the smile on his twitching lips. She did not move, sitting with haggard eyes and deepening facial lines. Her lack of response acted upon the raw irritability of his nerves.

"Who's put you up to this, anyway?" he demanded. "You'd never have thought of it yourself. And who do you suppose is going to pay your way for three thousand miles? Not I."

"I'll find the money, Steven."

"Look here!" He burst into sudden violence. "You've been talking me over with Lang! I sent you to tell him I was sick, and you've been whining about my treatment of you. Oh, I know more than he thinks I know! I took you away from him, and now he thinks he can take you away from me. It's Lang you're going to get the money from to leave me. By Heaven"—he took an uncertain, half-threatening step forward—"I'll never take another dollar of his dirty wages! I'd kill him on sight if I thought—if I thought—"

His voice trailed off before his wife's proud, steady gaze. She moved toward the door.

"You're sober this morning, Steven," she said, "but you aren't talking like a sober man. Think over what I've said and make your choice. Shall I go or stay?"

In the miniature kitchen she busied herself preparing an attractive meal. The bedroom door remained shut. She passed it again and again on her way to the dining room. While bending over the boiling contents of a saucepan, she heard it open, and immediately afterward came the opening and closing of the hall door. Her preparations were wasted. Steven's room was vacant, and his wardrobe showed that he had managed to dress fully and carefully before going out.

IV.

Marion, leaving the food to grow cold upon the range, roamed from room to

room, beginning a task only to abandon it, as anxiety urged her to the window to look up and down the street. The rain that had been falling heavily for days was still descending. Where had Steven gone? Surely not to the office. She knew that his outburst regarding Lang had not expressed any real suspicion. It had been but the irritable, self-lashed imagining of a mind still struggling under the effects of excesses from which the body had partially emerged. But if, in this surly and challenging mood, he should come into contact with a man already exasperated almost past endurance, what might not be the result?

She stood still in the middle of the little parlor, her hands pressed to her temples. A roll of thunder came, followed by a vicious dash of rain against the glass. Steven was well clad. His unfailing carefulness in the matter of attire had been a powerful ally in her efforts to deceive their acquaintances regarding his true character; but in this wild, chill weather, without food, weakened by his long debauch, and infuriated by her unexpected self-assertion, she knew he would inevitably turn for solace to the source from which all their misery had been derived. If, in that condition, he should go to Lang and tax him with treachery! Only one degree less terrible was the thought of his return to herself. She shuddered at the prospect of the night that lay before her.

But the night came; lights glittered out in the rain-swept streets. Marion pressed her forehead against the pane, searching the shadow-crossed circle around each lamp-post within her vision. No hurrying or stumbling pedestrian proved to be Steven. At midnight she turned back to the darkened rooms, and, wrapping a dressing gown about her, lay down upon the sitting-room couch. She was shivering with cold, but the rebellion of the morning still burned hot.

She would not lie down upon her bed. She would await here what might come.

From occasional snatches of sleep she would start up to hear, trembling, a footfall on the stairs, or, with momentary relief, a passing horse or motor. Dawn came, and she presently rose to begin the routine of the day's duties. She prepared some food mechanically, and, standing in the apology for a kitchen, began to eat, but the thought of Steven without the wholesome nourishment that alone could pull him back to even transient normality choked her at the second mouthful.

"So that is the quality of your religion!"

Steven's half-mocking, half-pleading, wholly miserable voice echoed in her ears.

She flung herself into the work of setting the little flat to rights, leaving to the last the room that she had avoided entering since yesterday, when she had found its occupant gone. Its condition sickened her, but the physical exertion necessary to reduce it to cleanliness and order checked for an hour the eddying of her thoughts about and about the fact that Steven had for the first time been driven from his home by her unkindness.

Resentment again assumed its unaccustomed sway, waxing as she recalled Steven's last words. Never before had he, when sober, suggested that her wifehood was less than perfect. Whatever



Marion shook so that it was with difficulty she reached the door.

bitterness he had made her suffer during those long periods when he was "not himself," he had always, upon recovering, made such amends as were possible by a wordy appreciation of her forbearance and a demonstrative gratitude for her care. Yesterday he had dared to hint that she—she—

Suddenly she sat down upon the foot of the now smooth and spotless bed, covering her face with her hands. Before her rose Lang's strong, rugged face and lean, wholesome frame. She remembered the keen, forceful, yet sympathetic, quality of his mind, befogged neither by physical frailties nor temperamental extravagances. What a bulwark such a husband would be.

It was almost an hour before she lifted her head, and then it was to slip to her knees with clasped hands and outstretched arms.

All through the afternoon the rain lashed the windows of the little flat. At four o'clock Marion went to the desk that contained Steven's writing materials, determined upon calling a messenger and dispatching a note to Lang to ask whether he had seen anything of her husband. Then she remembered that Steven's defection during the last ten days, just before the closing date of the magazine, would probably necessitate the editor's working at his office all day, Sunday though it was, and that he could be reached there by telephone without chance of his conversation with her being overheard.

She replaced the writing paper within the drawer, absently straightening, as she did so, a careless heap of folded typewritten sheets. The title of the top-most caught her eye: "The Home Angel."

Although, to her simple practicality, Steven's poetic flights were incomprehensible, yet her respect for them was sincere, and when some phase of her own character had been thus floridly set forth, her sense of unworthiness of such deification had heretofore made her forget the unworthiness of the man and remember only the tender condescension of the poet. Now her throat contracted as she read this flowery appreciation of a devotion linked, for literary effect, with a holiness and a purity that, in the light of her recent self-examination, she was not prepared to claim.

Within the folds of the manuscript lay a printed rejection slip. Was it this latest rebuff, this damming back of the outflowing of all that was best in his nature, that had overturned the weak resolve of the writer to be worthy of the devotion that he described? The pity and the hopelessness of it all ached

in Marion's heart so that she put her hand to her side as if to ease a physical pain, as she went to the telephone in the hall.

Lang's voice, crisp and ringing, immediately answered her call.

Yes, he was quite alone in his office. No, he had seen nothing of Steven. He had supposed he would be down to-morrow. Then, recognizing the anxiety in her tone, his own changed. What was the matter? Could he help her in any way?

She told him briefly of Steven's disappearance. He deprecated her fears, half laughing, his voice coming strong and comforting over the wire:

"Don't worry about him, Mrs. Ray. I guess I needn't look for much help from him to-morrow morning, but he'll turn up safe and sound at home. They always do, you know."

"But it's not quite the same as usual," Marion said. "He was really ill, weak, and he had eaten nothing for two days. And this terrible weather! If the rain would but stop, I'd go in search of him myself."

"There's fire and food in all bar-rooms," Lang said dryly. "Drunk or sober, Steven is always thoughtful for his own comfort. Now, Mrs. Ray, don't you do anything so foolish as to go out in this storm. By to-morrow noon I'll have this work cleared out of the way, and if by that time Steven has not put in an appearance, I'll get a taxi and go to every place he's likely to be. You'll see I'll find him safe enough. Now, leave it to me, and don't imagine things that have never happened."

"I can't thank you," Marion said brokenly. "You must be weary of my thanks."

"For anything I do for you I want no thanks," Lang said. "But listen, Marion. When I bring him home, it won't be for the purpose of prolonging your martyrdom. This is the time for you to make your stand, and you're go-

ing to hold to your guns. Remember, the money for your ticket is here."

"I mustn't talk longer," Marion said. "I'll never forget your kindness to—us."

She put the receiver on the hook and stood, with closed eyes and white cheeks, leaning against the wall.

V.

At noon the next day Lang's voice came, cheerful, heartening:

"The wanderer returned yet? No? All right. I'll get a bite of lunch and then start out. Ever see such weather? They say the river's level with the bridges. I'll drive along the levee and take a look at it. Steve's stormbound in some snug retreat over on the east side. He's like a cat about wetting his feet. Good-by. Don't worry."

At five o'clock Marion, patrolling restlessly from kitchen to front window, saw Lang leap from a taxi, and waited with held breath as he turned back. Was it to assist some less capable passenger? No, it was but to pay the chauffeur, and, when she opened her door, he strode in with a joking apology for tracking up her shining floor, but confessing defeat.

"If I could have stayed out another hour or so, I would have found him, sure, but the truth is we're marooned on this side of the river. The water is a foot above the level of the bridge. The cars are having a hard time crossing, and the chauffeur wasn't willing to risk trying to push his motor through. If I'd gone across, I mightn't have been able to get back, and I believe I'll stay on this side to-night. I've work to do at the office, and all our material for the month is down at the printing plant. It's on pretty low ground. I've half a mind to get the stuff out."

"Surely the levees are safe?"

Marion, balanced between apprehension and relief at his failure to bring

home the absentee, only half sensed the anxiety of the man before her.

"Oh, of course. Still, there's a heavy overwash already, and you need rubbers walking around that part of the town." He looked down ruefully at his clothing, wet almost to the knees. "I went into every place on this side where he was likely to be, but I had to change taxis because the machine broke down, and I lost time. He's on the other side undoubtedly, and he'll find it a good bit less sloppy over there, too. Don't you know Steve yet, Mrs. Ray? He always strikes for a soft spot. It's common folk like you and me, in whom no spark of heavenly genius burns, who have to take the rough places and the wet places."

He laughed with bantering kindness, leaning forward in his chair, his arm upon his knee, his rough hat swinging in his hand, in his eyes a tender, pitying impatience.

Marion, seated in a low rocker opposite him, leaned forward, also, her face drawing into tense lines.

"Are we quite fair to him, Harvey?"

Although it had been her custom before her marriage, she rarely called him by his first name now. That she should do so marked a special import in her words. Lang, sensitive to his finger tips regarding her, divined a mood of variance with that in which he had last seen her. He paused, seeking some force with which to meet opposition so elusive, yet so real; then, finding none but his habitual directness:

"Are you weakening?" he demanded.

"If you call it so."

The expression of the woman recalled to him that of the girl whom fifteen years before he had uselessly entreated not to throw her life away. She leaned back, her small, capable, housewifely hands grasping the slender arms of her chair, her eyes now raised to his, now fixed upon the rug at his feet.

"Harvey, your work means a great

deal to you. You've put the best of your life into it, and you've built up something you're very proud of. But even if your success had been less, you wouldn't have thrown it aside easily; you'd have left no chance untried to realize your hopes, to prevent the waste of all your past labor. And then, suppose that this task given you was yours alone, that no one else in all the world could take it up and carry it on, and that there was always hope, some little hope, that you might yet succeed.

"People wonder why so many women endure such lives as mine! They talk about the unreasoning tenacity of a woman's love; but they don't understand. Many of us don't understand ourselves. We just go on. But yesterday I looked the whole question straight in the face. It was like striking an anchor. I would have floated away, else—where, I dare not think."

The man opposite her moved as if about to speak, but refrained, and she went on:

"I don't love Steven any more. I think I haven't loved him for years. But I pity him, oh, so much! And he's my task, my work. I'm not clever or ambitious. If I gave up my work for him, I couldn't make a new career for myself. Housekeeping and nursing are the things I know how to do, and perhaps it's because I can do those things and love doing them that it's been given me to try to save a soul by means of them.

"You say the work that Bertha and her husband offer me is what I could do. It is. But their hospital is filled with just such wreckage as Steven would become if I left him. Oh, I know. I might say I was leaving him for a time in the hope of curing him, but it wouldn't be true. He's too weak to make any stand alone. His only chance is to have help always beside him. If I did what Bertha—and you—want, I'd be helping to swell at the

source a stream that I was trying to stem farther on. Each one of those poor derelicts whom Bertha and her husband are caring for is what he is because some one, somewhere, has failed to do the work that was hers.

"When I told Steven that I was going he said: 'So that's the quality of your religion! It's pleasanter to go off and nurse a lot of driftwood at the edge of civilization than to stay at home and look after the duties that belong to you.' He spoke from selfishness, but he spoke the truth.

"I'm not deceiving myself. I know there's but a chance in a thousand that, even with me beside him, he will ever make a firm stand, a fresh start, but without me there would be no chance at all.

"We will no longer burden you with our failures. We'll begin again somewhere else. He's restless under long residence in any one place. The interest of a new beginning often keeps him straight for some time. You've been my friend—his friend, too—our best and kindest friend. I know you're disappointed in me. But, Harvey, I have my life work to do, even as you have yours. I mustn't give it up."

Lang rose, covered the space between his chair and the wall in three quick strides, and, returning, stood looking down at the small, bowed head and clasped hands. His face was working; his eyes behind his glasses suffused, but fiery.

"Good God, Marion!" he burst out. "To think of the life I could have given you—of the home over there that is yours! And you've tied yourself to *this!*"

VI.

The bell in the hall shrilled. Marion sprang to her feet and Lang moved toward the door, but the visitors were two ladies, rain-cloaked and umbrellaed, bringing from the church Marion

attended certain urgent work with which she had promised to assist. They sat down to explain it, and Lang left the house.

The three women were occupied for some time; then Marion, forced to unwilling hospitality by the continued rain and the lateness of the hour, offered an informal meal, after which they returned to the work, Marion's mind distraught and her ears strained for a stumbling footfall on the stair.

At nine o'clock it came, and, recognizing it at once, she turned with desperate composure to her companions.

"I'm afraid I can do no more to-night. Mr. Ray may be home any minute, and I must have something ready for him to eat."

Steven's key was in the lock. He found it with surprising ease. He crossed the little passage and leaned against the casing of the parlor door. The umbrella he carried dripped unheeded, and his overcoat hung open, displaying the still graceful figure and well-cut clothes beneath. He was not noticeably disheveled, his appearance announcing to Marion that his absence had not been passed in an unbroken debauch, but the curious, wild-beastlike gleam of his blue eyes, and the faint, unmirthful cunning of his smile, warned her of the ugly mood to which a certain stage of intoxication always brought him.

"Good evening," he said, enunciating very carefully. "Good evening."

Marion, with the pitiafully ready resourcefulness of the drunkard's wife, came forward quickly.

"You're late, Steven," she said. "And how wet you are! Mrs. Holland and Miss Burke," she pronounced the names very clearly so as to recall the identity of the visitors to his wandering memory, "have been spending the evening with me. They'll excuse us, I'm sure, while I get you some dry things."

She did not dare touch him, but she stood so as to bar his entrance to the room.

Steven, who, so far as he was dependable at all, could be depended upon to present a decent front to strangers, straightened up, laying a heavy hand upon his wife's shoulder and bending upon her a lowering look which, as it wandered past her, melted again into the half-silly, half-evil smile.

"Good evening," he said again solemnly. "Good evening," and, wheeling, he walked quickly down the passage to his bedroom, his wife following. She closed the door and stood with her back against it, breathing quickly. But she spoke soothingly:

"Sit down, Steven, and take off your wet shoes. I'll get you some supper, but I must see those people out first. They were just going when you came in."

Steven glowered at her.

"You'll stay where you are," he said savagely. "What are those dames doing here? Can't a man come into his own house and find anything ready for him? Where are my slippers? Where is my supper? What's my wife doing, gossiping about me with a lot of — churchwomen instead of attending to her business?" His voice rose from a low growl to a roar. "Men have thrown their wives through the window for less than this," he went on, working himself up into a maniacal fury; "thrown them clear through the glass, and heard them drop on the pavement. Drop-on—the pavement," he repeated, and laughed, a low, cruel, lunatic laugh.

He approached slowly as if to seize her. Marion, deadly pale, faced him until he halted a step away. Then her fingers stole out to the door handle, turned it, and in a moment she was in the passage, the door closed tightly behind her. Experience told her that Steven would not follow. Although he

might threaten, he was, so long as any intelligence at all remained to him, as sensitive as she was to the exposure of his weaknesses to a world the respect and admiration of which he avidly desired.

The two ladies were already at the exit door.

"Don't trouble to let us out, Mrs. Ray," they called, seeing her appear. "We know you're busy. Good night."

Marion, with feigned cheerfulness, responded, saw the door close, heard their descending steps upon the stair, and turned back, alone, to meet the familiar horror awaiting her.

So often had she met it that her procedure was almost mechanical. Within certain limits, she knew almost to a certainty what Steven would do, but always there lurked the knowledge that the drunkard's limits cannot be depended upon; that, under some real or fancied provocation, he may at any time lose himself entirely, commit any crime. Long ago she had learned to forbid her imagination to linger about that thought, but at times it seized her in a terrorizing grip impossible to shake off, whispering that the end of all this must be tragedy. To-night the premonition held her, yet fear was almost absent.

She went into the kitchen, put coffee on the fire, and arranged a tray, but she had not completed her preparations when the bedroom door opened and her husband peremptorily summoned her.

"I was getting your supper, Steven," she said, going to him. "Did you come across the river to-night? They say it's very high."

Sometimes, by ignoring a truculent mood, she was able to soothe it to a milder one, but to-night her manner seemed only to inflame him.

"Did I come across the river?" he said, mimicking her tone. "What is it to you whether I came across the river or not? What do you care whether I

drown or not? *You're* going to nurse blackguards out at the Klondike. *You're* so good that you've got to look after twenty men, a hundred men, instead of your own husband. That is, if I let you. But perhaps I won't. Here's something that would prevent you."

He plunged his hand into his breast, and, withdrawing it, flourished before her horrified eyes a six-chambered revolver.

Marion's hand flew to her throat, repressing by force the scream that rose to it.

"Where did you get that thing?" she asked quietly.

Steven, plainly discomfited by his failure to terrorize her, looked at the weapon in his hand as if puzzled for a moment as to how he had come by it, then slowly replaced it in his pocket.

"Oh, I didn't get it for you," he said, staring at her with eyes from which the enmity was dying. "I got it for myself," and, suddenly dropping into his chair, with his arms upon the table beside it, he fell forward upon them and broke into maudlin tears.

Marion, the crisis past, shook so that it was with difficulty she reached the door, but in a few moments she returned, bearing hot coffee and food. Steven pushed the latter away, but drank the former greedily, cup after cup, drowsiness creeping upon him as he did so. Presently he roused himself.

"Get to bed!" he commanded thickly.

Marion's mind was busy with plans for getting possession of the revolver.

"I'm not going to lie down just yet," she said. "Let me take your coat, Steven."

"Get to bed, I tell you!" Steven repeated, his anger flaring up again, half asleep though he was. "You may be going to leave me to-morrow, but you're my wife yet, and you'll do what I say."

He came threateningly toward her.

She did not rise or shrink, but held him with her eyes.

"I'm not going to leave you, Steven," she said.

"Oh!" he sneered, his arm still up-lifted. "You've changed your mind?"

"I've changed my mind. But—don't strike me, Steven. You've never done that yet."

The man's hand fell to his side. He stared stupidly at her; then, with uneven strides, he reached the bed, and, dressed as he was, dropped upon it, overcome by heavy-breathed sleep almost before he touched the pillow.

VII.

Marion sat still until assured that no ordinary sound would awake her husband, and then moved softly to the bedside, hoping to be able to extract from his pocket the weapon he had placed there, but he was resting upon that side. Realizing his danger in lying prone and unconscious upon a loaded revolver, she determined to watch until he changed his position, and for an hour she sat where she could see his every movement. But, except for the jerking of a hand or a foot, he seemed sunk in the deepest slumber.

Gradually, exhausted by preceding nights of little rest, Marion's own eyelids began to droop, and she forced herself to wakefulness only by moving stealthily about from room to room. The clock in the parlor told midnight. The rain no longer beat upon the window, and she hoped it had ceased, but found that the wind had changed and was driving the drops in another direction. After another visit to the bedroom, she lay down upon the couch, so overcome with weariness as to find it impossible longer to sit or stand erect. Struggle as she would, her eyes closed, and when she started into full wakefulness again, it was with a sense of having slept a long time.

The clock pointed to four-thirty. Except for its ticking, absolute stillness prevailed, but in a few moments a distant sound reached her ear, and she recognized it as a repetition of that which had aroused her from sleep. It came from without, a long way off, and seemed like a shout, accompanied by a duller noise, the nature of which she could not fix. After a visit to Steven, having found him still in the same position, she returned to the front room, and, as noiselessly as possible, pushed up the window sash.

Unmistakably now, the sound was that of a man's voice, shouting lustily, and accompanying his cries by heavy blows upon some hard substance. She could not distinguish his words until his footsteps were also audible as he dashed back and forth across the street, his figure now visible in a lamp's glare, now swallowed up by the rainy darkness.

"Get up!" he cried hoarsely, showering blows with a watchman's nightstick upon each door as he paused before it. "Get up, and run for higher ground. The levees have burst, and you'll all be drowned. Get up! Get up and run!"

Lights leaped in windows far down the street, the wet pavements glistened, and the gutters gurgled sullenly, but the import of the man's warning seemed part of some dream fantasy to the bewildered woman. Then, as the door beneath her quaked under his blows and the man rushed on, another sound came, indistinctly, throbbingly, on the wind; a sound as of the distant mutter of the sea.

Marion sprang from her knees at the window, realization of their peril seizing her, and, at the same time, she heard movements and excited voices in the flat below, announcing that the other occupants of the house were astir. She flew to the bedroom and, forgetful of her former fears, shook Steven violently by the shoulder, crying to him to awake and rise. He rolled over, facing her,



But he only commanded: "Keep perfectly still!" and stepped out upon the plank.

but his half-open eyes showed no understanding of her words.

"Get up!" she repeated, as had the watchman. "Oh, Steven, for the love

of Heaven, rouse yourself and help me to save what we can! The river has burst its banks and the water is sweeping in. Get up, Steven! Get up!"

She dragged him to a sitting posture and then rushed to the hall door, at which came the furious knocking of one of the tenants from below.

"I wanted to be sure you were awake, Mrs. Ray," the man said. "I'm afraid this is pretty bad. There's six inches of water in the street already. My wife and I have got a few things together and we're going to beat it for higher ground right away. So are the people on the other side. I'd advise you to do the same. Mr. Ray is with you? I don't believe those young folks over there have wakened up. I'll rout them out, and then we're gone. You're on the upper floor, but you'd better get out just the same, or you may be caught for days. I've been in a flood before."

He pounded with fists and feet upon the door of the flat opposite, which was occupied by a young married couple, then sped down the stairs.

Again Marion rushed to the bedroom, this time to find Steven standing in the middle of the floor, intelligence slowly dawning in his face.

"What's all this fuss about?" he was saying. "The levee burst? Well, it can't hurt us. We're upstairs."

"But every one is running away, Steven. I can hear the people in the street. And the watchman said we would be drowned. The water sounds like the sea coming. Oh, let's get what we can together, and go, too!"

True to her instinct for his protection, she was urging him into his greatcoat as she spoke. Then, flying to the dresser, she collected purse and trinkets and thrust them into his pockets. A weeping voice from the passage came to them:

"Oh, Mrs. Ray, Mrs. Ray, what are we going to do?"

Outside the bedroom door Marion found the bride from across the hall, barefooted and tumble-haired, her husband's bath robe flung over her nightgown, her childish face terror-stricken.

"Will is packing our grips, but we can't go into that water. I looked out, and it would be up to our knees."

"Go back and put your clothes on!" Marion commanded. "Perhaps it won't rise any higher, but I'm sure we'd better go."

Steven pushed past them on his way to the front room. Marion heard him raise the window to its farthest limit. The March wind swept chillingly through the narrow corridor. Sounds of the splashing of water and the cries of many voices came up from the street. When he returned to the bedroom, all traces of intoxication were gone.

"I don't believe we can get away now," he said, "and we're safe enough up here. Come and see for yourself. Don't be so frightened, Marion."

He put his arm about her and led her to the window from which he had been reconnoitering. As they reached it, a shudder ran through the building, and a horrible, half-sucking, half-roaring sound from beneath told them that the water had burst its way through basement and first-story windows, its terrific weight making the whole framework tremble.

With the sense of enduring a nightmare from which she must awake in a moment, Marion clung to her husband; then, the necessity for action again asserting itself, she rushed into the corridor and looked down, to find the hall below a churning caldron of water reaching halfway up the stairs. Steven, following, was talking hurriedly with the young man from the other flat.

"We must make a raft and be ready to launch it if the water reaches this floor. Is there any sort of lumber in your place?"

"Table tops—nothing else; and they're not big enough. Have you a kitchen table?"

"No; only a wall board. Doors! We must take them off the hinges."

With fierce haste the two men

wrested from their hinges the kitchen and bedroom doors and laid them side by side upon the parlor floor.

"Nails!" they shouted above the uproar from without. "And a hammer!" And the two women flew to find what was required.

The hammer was readily forthcoming from Marion's household tool box, but of nails long enough to fasten together the two thick doors there were none.

"If we could find some strips of wood to nail across," Steven said; but, even as he spoke, water began to seep through the floor on which they stood. The other man ran to the window.

"No raft could live in that stream," he said, coming back, white-faced and panting. "Our only chance is to get to the next house. It's a story higher than this, and it's new. It may be stronger. We must make a bridge."

A space about eight feet wide divided the little apartment house from a structure three stories high, and still in the workmen's hands. Walls, flooring, and roof had been completed, but the windows were still unglazed. The second-story windows were almost on a level with their own.

The four prisoners fled to the bedroom, the men carrying with them one of the doors, but it was plain that it would not bridge the space. The narrow alley had become a boiling sluiceway, its waters racing by only three or four feet below the sill. Desperately the four faced each other. Even the little bride had ceased to weep. The brain of each was working at uttermost speed.

"Ironing boards!" Marion cried, springing toward the door. "Have you one, Mrs. Hewlett?"

The girl, without answering, fled across the hall, the oozing boards springing beneath her feet, and in a moment the two were back, each bearing a twelve-inch-wide, blanket-covered plank. Each board measured five feet

in length; it left a margin of but two feet for joining and for overlapping the two window sills.

Swiftly Steven drove nails through the soft pine. For an instant Marion found herself marveling at the force and steadiness of his blows. Was this the man who, less than twelve hours before, had been unable to guide a cup safely to his lips?

The frail bridge finished, they pushed it across to the opposite window, five or six inches supporting it on either side.

"We should have tested it first," young Hewlett said, "to see if it will stand our weight."

"No time now," Steven said. "I'll run across first. Can you follow me, Marion?"

"I don't know."

Marion, deathly sick, looked out at the foaming stream and up at her husband. It had always been physically impossible for her to look down from a height, to maintain her balance upon a narrow footing, or to look upon rapidly moving water without nausea. It came to her with horrid certainty that, though she must else drown like a rat, she could not cross the bridge.

"I'm lighter than you, Mr. Ray," young Hewlett said. "I'll go first and hold the board steady at the other end. Carrie, do you think you can come right after me?"

"Yes," said the girl, and breathlessly they watched her husband make the short journey to the other side.

The lower sash of the window was pushed up level with the upper, and the young wife ducked under and ran across with the sure-footedness of the country girl accustomed in her childhood to skimming the tops of fences.

"Now, Marion," Steven said, and she looked up at him with white cheeks.

He helped her to the sill and she stooped as had the others, but from below there arose an agonized yelp, and she looked down, to see, in a horridly

revealing flare, a struggling, drowning dog, beating with frenzied paws the water that was sucking him down. She drew back with a moan and slipped to the floor.

"I can't do it, Steven. You must go without me. I'd rather stay here than fall into that dreadful place. Quick! Leave me! Good-by!"

She pulled his face down to her, pushing him toward the window as she did so, but he grasped her roughly by both arms and set her to one side.

"Stand out of the way!" he cried, seizing a chair.

She did not know what he was about until he sent it crashing through the double window sashes, the glass scattering and the framework falling outward into the stream. It left the six-foot aperture clear. Before she could guess his intention, he had lifted her in his arms, holding her as he would an infant, and leaped upon the sill.

"Steven," she cried, struggling, "it will never bear both our weights!" But he only commanded: "Keep perfectly still!" and stepped out upon the plank.

The man at the other window shouted a horrified warning, then threw his whole strength into the effort to steady and support the plank at his end. For a hideous moment, as they reached the center, it bent, but it did not part, only falling into the stream when spurned by Steven's foot, as he sprang with his burden into the six inches of water that covered the floor of their new refuge.

VIII.

In spite of the storm clouds that hung over the city, the daylight had broadened so that the four refugees could see their surroundings plainly. They were in a large, newly plastered room, from which a rough, lime-littered staircase led upward. To it they ran, splashing through the water that lapped icily at their ankles, and at the top found

themselves in a great, bare, unplastered attic, dimly lit by a small aperture at the back, the two windows at the front being boarded over.

Holding one another's hands, as children might, they stumbled over the boards and rubbish that strewed the floor, and, shivering with cold and terror, peered through the cracks of the window coverings. The men pushed the women back, and, prying off a single plank, reconnoitered with stouter mien, if no less appalled hearts, the frightful scene without.

The street that an hour earlier had been a narrow, shabby thoroughfare, awaiting the feet that daily traversed it in pursuit of work or pleasure, was now a foaming, scurrying river, in the current of which were borne along milk wagons, hucksters' carts, and other light vehicles such as are early astir; dogs, cats, fowls; a wretched horse, broken harness straps floating about it, swimming desperately, with open mouth flung upward, emitting cries human in their terror and agony; wooden steps, porches, and other outlying portions of buildings; clothing, such as hats and shawls, giving sinister suggestion of human beings lost beneath.

The banks of the devouring stream were the upper stories of houses, from many of whose windows men and women leaned, some shrieking for aid, others in dumb horror. That many of the occupants must have made their escape before the torrent had engulfed the lower stories was evident, but enough remained to threaten a fearful loss of life should the flood rise much higher. Here and there marooned humanity appeared upon the roofs of buildings, and from such points flags of distress were already beginning to fly to attract the notice of possible rescuers. Ray and Hewlett turned back to the women.

"Don't look out, dear," the younger man said, putting his arms about the shuddering form of his wife, and

Steven turned to Marion. Always he had found strength and comfort awaiting him there, but, in this fearful emergency, something was struggling for life within him that seemed to find strength in giving rather than receiving.

"The water is still a good many feet below us," he said. "They'll surely send boats from the hill before it reaches us."

Then he took off the light overcoat he still wore and wrapped it about his wife.

"It's pretty wet outside, but the lining's dry. You're all in, Mamie. Sit down on that heap of shavings and take off your shoes and stockings. We'll wring them out and perhaps they'll dry after a while."

Dazed and shivering, she obeyed, deriving some comfort from the contact of the warm cloth about her shoulders, for she was dressed only in the thin house clothing that she had worn since the day before. The other woman had donned a woolen sweater over the medley of garments she had managed to throw about her.

Then began a day of suffering and terror that grew as, hour by hour, their expectation of rescue lessened, and, inch by inch, the greedy water rose. They tore the boarding entirely away from one window so that free egress might be had in the event of a boat drawing near, and the women huddled in the more sheltered corner, when not sharing their husbands' watch.

Late in the afternoon, a boat came fighting its way through the floating debris that trebled the dangers of the rushing tide. It was a small, flat-bottomed affair, manned by two heroes, who shouted encouragement to those who begged for aid, assuring them that the work of rescue was under way, and that the great reservoir, the bursting of which would mean a veritable deluge, still held. But their little craft, kept right side up by almost miraculous dexterity, could carry only three persons

beside the oarsmen, and the man who consigned his wife and two young children to it looked after them with almost as many fears for their fate as were felt by the half-crazed woman regarding him whom she was thus forced to abandon.

At the height of about half the second story the rising of the water seemed to cease, but there was no sign of a recession, and, as darkness fell, there could be seen upon the surface of the stream a curious, bluish gleam which, connected with the almost stifling odors that began to arise, the prisoners guessed to be gasoline or kerosene freed from overturned tanks throughout the city. In addition, the unmistakable smell of gas warned them of rent and leaking mains.

During the day the men had congratulated themselves upon having a supply of matches in their pockets, by which, with the aid of wood fragments, they might be saved from the horror of utter darkness, and even obtain a little warmth; but this new development made perilous the striking of a light, and their hearts quaked as, from time to time, the boom of an explosion reached their ears, or a flame leaped up in some quarter within the range of their outlook.

Two and two, they watched by turns, those at the window straining their eyes into the hideous murk outside, filled with threatening shadows and piteous sounds, while the others crouched in the most sheltered corner, exhaustion craving the relief of sleep for pain-shot, aching bodies, but apprehension whipping their minds into an alertness that noted every dragging minute of each fear-laden hour. They spoke little and complained not at all of their sufferings. A sickening quiver ran at intervals through the walls against which they leaned, as if the building were heaving a long, sobbing breath, and at each repetition husband and wife drew closer



*"Take her, Lang," he said. "Next to her, you've been the best friend I ever had.
I'll join you both later—if I can."*

together, but said no word of the deepest dread that lay in all their hearts.

Once during the long night Steven said:

"Little woman, why have you stuck to me all these years?"

"Because you are mine, Steven," Marion said simply, and he laid his cheek against hers and drew about her the inadequate covering his coat afforded, as they pressed closer together for warmth and courage.

Day, bringing with it the alleviation

of light, brought also the torments of hunger and thirst. A crust of bread, dropped days before from a workman's dinner pail, was divided carefully into four portions, and eased temporarily the gnawing of famished stomachs. Then, from an inner pocket, Steven produced for the first time a flask. Marion shrank when she saw it; but, instead of putting it to his own lips, he put it to hers.

"Drink!" he said, and, although she allowed but a teaspoonful to go down

her throat, the fiery liquor sent the life coursing through her frozen veins. Steven filled the cap of the flask three times, administering the contents in turn to each of their companions and to himself, then screwed the cap carefully on and gave the flask to his wife.

"Put it away somewhere," he said, "and give us each just that much every couple of hours."

With the flask in her hands, she went to the window, and he followed her and stood looking out at the now familiarly dreadful scene.

"I was afraid to take it out before," he said quietly.

She did not answer, but the tears rolled down her cheeks for the first time since their awful adventure had begun. He stooped and kissed her, and she endeavored to replace the flask in his pocket, but he shook his head.

"Put it away somewhere," he repeated, and she obeyed him.

As the day wore on, the river flowing through their narrow street gathered heavier toll from that which flowed through the broader thoroughfare it intersected. That motor boats had been launched upon that wider stream they guessed from sounds drifting on the wind, and from the reports, shouted from mouth to mouth, of watchers from windows or roofs. And in the hope of attracting attention to their plight, Steven stretched out of the window and fired upward several shots from the revolver which, with some cloudy design of self-destruction, he had purchased two days before.

But it became more and more apparent that no motor-propelled craft could make its way through the seething and congested passage they looked out upon. Broken telegraph poles, swerving sometimes so that their great length barred the stream, uprooted trees, small buildings, and portions of larger ones, tipping this way and that as the current hurried them along; even

automobiles, weighing tons, floated—a nightmare procession—through this narrow street.

Toward the middle of the afternoon there came from the right of the house in which they stood a rending, crashing sound that curdled the blood of the four refugees, and sent them close together with the instinctive idea of combining their strength against some new and overwhelming peril. The next instant they rushed to the window, to see the house that, forty-eight hours before, had been their home, leave its foundations, and float out into the stream, holding together in some crooked fashion for what had been a block or more, then slowly disintegrating into such *débris* as formed, with other floating objects, a barrier over and through which the water leaped, but through which no human strength could force a passage. At the same time, the quiver they had often felt before was repeated once and again with greater distinctness throughout the entire framework of the building that harbored them.

Silently they waited while the hours crawled by, and the shadows of another awful night began to creep into an atmosphere already dense with rain and smoke. Then, from the rear of their refuge, came the sound of a sharp explosion, and, running to the aperture at the back, they saw flames shooting up into the sky from the roof of a building just behind them, while sparks showered in every direction.

With low moans the women hid their faces; then all sped back to scan, with dying hope, the only passage through which aid could possibly come—that along which the tide ceaselessly bore flotsam from the intersecting river at their right.

Then, as the men leaned far out of the window, shouts were heard from many throats, and piteous screams of:

"Here! Here! Help us!" echoed back and forth.

Borne along partly by the tide, partly by his own giant strokes, a man came, braving the dangers that on every side menaced his little boat. A comparatively clear interval of water afforded him opportunity to reach the place in front of where the little apartment house had recently stood. He reversed his oars, slacking his progress, and peered up through gleaming glasses at the windows on either side from which issued heart-rending prayers for aid. He appeared to hesitate, with difficulty steadying his hazard-beset craft in midstream, then he raised his voice in a mighty shout that rang above the rushing water and the cries of those who entreated his help:

"Marion!"

As his call echoed through the street, a great tongue of flame, licked forward by the wind, danced devilishly over the roof of the half-submerged building, little more than a shell at best, in the attic of which the little group stood. Their faces in the window caught the reflection cast back by the water, and the glare fell full upon the face of Harvey Lang, to whom, with frantic cries, they all flung out appealing hands.

IX.

The attic window was some six feet above the level of the water, and, when, with extraordinary skill, Lang evaded contact with a piece of heavy furniture borne down upon him by the tide, he was swept against the wall with a force that almost overturned his boat. But it righted, and, with one muscular arm, he seized the top of the wooden column that formed a part of the unfinished ornamentation of a second-story window, now more than half covered by water. Holding fast to this anchorage, he shouted up:

"I can take two. You, Marion, and Steven."

The floor rocked violently under their feet as Steven leaned from the window.

"There's another woman here," he called down.

"Lower them down, then," Lang replied. "Your wife first."

But Marion drew back from the window, pushing forward the girl, whom the two men seized, and, clinging to her arms and clothing, lowered to a point where Lang, with his free arm, could ease her into the boat.

"Now, Marion," Steven said. But suddenly from the girl in the boat came a piercing scream of realization that she was to be separated forever from her young husband. Lang was standing up and striving with a rope to lash his heaving boat to the slippery top of the column. Hewlett stooped toward her with extended hands; then the instinct of self-preservation irresistibly asserted itself above his manhood, and he leaped upon the sill. But before he could drop into the boat, Steven Ray flung out a barring arm across the casement.

"No, you don't," he said. "Did you never hear of 'women and children first'? Stand back! There's a bullet left in this gun yet!"

The unhappy boy, craven only from exhaustion and long-continued dread, staggered back into the room, covering his eyes with his arm to shut out the sickening heaving of the walls before him.

Ray lifted his wife and thrust her bodily through the aperture, but she clung to his neck.

"I can't leave you, Steven!" she cried. "I will not!"

Lang had succeeded in lashing the skiff so that it was temporarily steadied against the building, though the rope slipped, even at the perilous moment in which, standing erect, he grasped Marion's struggling figure in his arms. Ray forcibly disengaged his wife's

hands, kissing her face as he did so, and leaned far out, pushing her from him.

"Take her, Lang," he said. "Next to her, you've been the best friend I ever had. I'll join you both later—if I can."

The boat lurched away from its momentary mooring. Lang, weighted as he was, swerved sideways, regaining his balance by a terrific effort, and stumbled forward, dropping his burden in a senseless heap at his feet.

The other woman huddled over it, moaning and crying her husband's name, while Lang, seizing the oars, saw destruction bearing down upon them in the approach of two fearful objects upon the black and wind-tossed tide.

A great six-passenger car, washed from the broader stream of the main street into this narrower channel, dipped horribly up and down like a leaping beast of prey, rapidly converging toward an uprooted tree, which, but a few hours ago a living, growing thing, now floated, its great roots half submerged, its branches trailing behind and spreading half across the stream. They were coming with the tide, which Lang must breast in order to return whither he had come, and were but a few hundred yards away. There was no time to go to either side; to pass between was the only hope; but to be caught in the collision of those two awful forces meant to be crushed in the jaws of death.

After a dozen terrific strokes, Lang flung his oars in the bottom of the boat, called to his conscious passenger to throw her weight to the other side, and turned upon his knees to await the advancing peril. He knew the hopelessness of pitting human strength against the weight of the car, but of the tree so much was under water that he could only guess its size and shape.

As the first outbranching root came within his reach, Lang grasped it, pushing with starting veins and muscles, yet clinging so as to hold his little craft

nearer to the lesser danger. The next root he grasped and the next, pushing the boat close against the great trunk until the length of the car was past, its nose grinding into the foremost root of the elm amidst the trailing branches of which Lang now struggled his perilous way.

Then it was that a rending, crunching sound rose above the storm and the cries that penetrated it, and Lang called to the woman before him: "Don't look back!" For he saw the flimsy house they had just left heave upon its foundations, lurch forward, and collapse into the flood, carrying with it all hope for the human lives imprisoned within.

X.

Through the entrance of a great manufactory, situated upon ground elevated above the reach of the flood, refugees staggered or were carried.

Outside a closed door upon an upper floor Harvey Lang stood. The dawn, stealing in through the great windows, revealed a face haggard to ghastliness, lacerated hands, and tattered, dripping garments. The door opened, disclosing a small office room, and one of the women who composed the volunteer corps of nurses came out.

"Do you want to go in?" she asked. "She has come to. I've told her, and I think she understands."

Marion lay upon a couch, her eyes closed, her dark hair streaming to the floor, her face like death.

Lang went forward, and, kneeling beside her, spoke in a voice that had in it all the pent-up fear and subsequent relief of the days and nights just past:

"Marion! My love! You are safe!"

She sat up, white, staring. Then, into her eyes came remembrance, horror, a great, unspeakable pity. Her trembling hands put away the arms of the man who knelt by her side.

"Wait, Harvey," she whispered. "Not yet. To-day he begins anew."



Foot Care and Foot Woes

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

A FALLACY to which most people accede is that the human foot is monstrously ugly to begin with and that the less said of it the better. Nothing is farther from the truth than that the foot is lacking in beauty. To be sure, when, after much hesitation and a good deal of chagrin, it is—of necessity—displayed, its appearance and condition usually fully justify the belief, for most adult feet are ugly; there is lamentable scarcity of healthy, normally formed feet among civilized races.

The human foot is an extraordinary piece of mechanism, remarkable for its strength and endurance, but laboring under the constant disadvantage of unsuitable footwear and unhygienic treatment. It begins early in life to protest against these things. Scant attention, however, is usually given to foot sufferings, and by the time middle life is reached, these overburdened and faithful servitors are more or less permanently crippled.

The foot is structurally far more complex than the hand, and, contrary to popular opinion, much more flexible. Incased as it has been for centuries in civilized footwear, its freedom of action has been seriously hampered, so

that the modern foot is not unlike the bound foot of the Chinese woman of the past. We commonly regard the action of the foot as consisting merely of flexion, extension, and rotation; whereas it has thirty-eight articulations. The extraordinary movements of Ruth St. Denis, Genée, Isadore Duncan, and other famous dancers could not possibly be executed were it not for the remarkable flexibility and strength of their feet. The so-called "plantar fascia" is perhaps the toughest tissue in the body; it extends along the sole of the foot from the heel to the toes and there sends out fibers to each toe.

And speaking of toes, by the way, to so little use are they put by the average civilized being that they are in danger of complete extinction. The toes of moderns are becoming smaller with each generation, and although one may regard this as a mark of higher development, and compare with pride our stubby toes to the strange-looking, prehensile pedal formation of savages, it is we who are retrograding and throwing our feet back to a type that is really not human. A scientist expresses the belief that the future foot of the more highly developed races will be one-toed. It assuredly will be if we

continue to cramp it into footwear that precludes all possibility of using the toes.

A military writer, referring to the footwear of soldiers on the march, says: "The naked, barefoot savage is one person; the civilized man, booted and clad according to the customs—senseless or otherwise—of his race, is another."

It is a well-recognized and admitted fact that modern footwear is ruinous to the feet, and in many instances to the health. Yet we fear to make any startling innovations. Physicians have of late years protested so much against the cruel practice of shoeing children haphazardly that greater care in this respect is now being exercised. But of what avail is this when the child, as soon as it is half grown, is shod in the same old way? The chief harm done to tender little feet in haphazard shoeing is to reduce and then gradually destroy the wonderful development and activity of the great toe.

Nature never intended the human foot to be incased and held viselike in a shoe, as most feet are, so that its remarkable flexibility degenerates into the rigidity of a hoof. Many persons use the foot as if it were an immobile clod, a solid mass, seemingly ignorant

of the fact that if the motion is limited, the mechanics of the foot are altered. Not only does it become a weaker organ, but it interferes with proper walking, with the poise of the body, and to a great extent with the general health. Those who possess marked grace of bearing and of walk

are usually endowed with slender feet and long great toes, because, in walking correctly, the toes strike the floor first. If this method is not natural to the individual, it is extremely difficult to acquire.

Many years ago the young ladies of a fashionable school were trained not to walk on their heels by a device consisting of a rubber ball and whistle, so placed that when they walked across the room, the whistle sounded at each step if the heel touched the floor. Young ladies of the present day

are too busy with other "frivolities" to spend their time in this manner, but it was time well spent, for it not only developed the feet and conduced to the beauty and charm of a well-poised body, but it prevented many foot ills from which the girls of to-day suffer. Indeed, the value of walking correctly is as little understood and appreciated by the present generation as are the exquisite manners of our grandparents.



The great toe is drawn away from its neighbor by means of surgeon's plaster.

Using the heels in walking gives rise to much awkwardness; the body is thrown out of equilibrium; fatigue, weakness, strain, and deformity result. Heel-and-toe walking is more fatiguing than running. The shock given the spinal column and brain each time the heels strike the floor is well proven by the manner in which sufferers from headache involuntarily avoid this jar by cautious tiptoeing. Rubber heels offer a compromise—they markedly reduce the concussion, and should be used by all heel walkers; but they are unnecessary to those who walk correctly. Before this can be done, however, one must stand correctly.

Children should not be taught to turn their toes *out*, as this is conducive to eversion of the great toe, a deformity that comes on quickly enough as soon as leather shoes are worn. The fleet-footed Indians stand and walk beautifully, with much native dignity and poise; their feet do not deviate outward, but point straight ahead. The great toe, however, does not point ahead—that is, it is not on a straight line with the inner border of the foot, but turns slightly *inward*. The soft moccasins of the Indians, like the sandals of the Japanese, in no wise interfere with the normal development, functions, and movements of the feet; which recalls the fact that the sandal-wearing Japs easily outmarched the husky Russians during the Russo-Japanese war.

A noted specialist on the treatment of children lays much stress upon non-interference with the development of the great toe. He says: "That this matter of forcing the first toe out of its normal position may bring with it serious consequences is easily shown. As it inclines against the second toe, it often crowds it backward and finally makes it the distressing 'hammer toe,' which may even require a surgical operation for its relief. On the inside of the foot, as soon as the axis of the

first toe is bent, we begin to find a bulging out of the joint, which in later years, fostered by pair after pair of tight and ill-fitting boots, is capable of giving the most exquisite pain. *Still more subtle than this is the trouble that often comes from disabling the great toe from performing its full function. The elasticity of one's step depends largely upon one's power to press down firmly with the great toe and then raise the weight of the body over it as a support*; when this is lost by crippling the toe with ill-shaped boots, the muscles not only of the toes, but of adjacent groups begin to atrophy—to waste. This soon leaves the internal arch of the foot without sufficient support, and the long series of woes incident to flat foot is started upon."

Many physicians believe that children should be allowed to run barefoot during warm weather. More sensible, however, is the use of leather sandals—without stockings, as they hamper the play of the toes. Adults would find it decidedly advantageous to pursue this course indoors all year round, especially in cases of painful feet.

When, from lack of proper care in childhood, the feet are stiff and awkward, much can be done to make them more supple and limber by persistent daily exercise and inunctions of oil.

Raise and lower the body upon the toes ten times in succession frequently during the day, and rub the feet morning and night with a penetrating oil. The feet are grateful for any care, and soon respond. The suppleness of the toes can be developed even late in life by adding to the above exercise that of forcibly separating the toes. So helpless are some people in this respect that their toes are absolutely without voluntary motion; that is, they cannot force themselves apart and furl outward like a fan as the fingers are able to. All this may seem unimportant, but health and long life are materially



Resting the feet on the outer borders relieves
"weak-foot."

dependent upon the feet, to say nothing of grace and beauty.

A slight idea of perfect ability to co-ordinate movements and of absolute control of bodily equilibrium can be gained from instantaneous photographs of the famous dancers mentioned above. These photographs are startling because in them the dancers rarely touch the floor; they seem in constant flight. So exquisitely, so perfectly executed is each action that the light, graceful figures are more like embodied spirits than human beings. And this marvelous art is primarily dependent upon the feet.

The most common trouble that results from the improper use of the feet is *weakness*. This may be caused by relaxation of the ligaments, especially of the one already referred to—the plantar fascia—or of the muscles, and sometimes of both. After an illness the feet

are usually very weak, chiefly because the bones take up most of the nourishment. Children who outgrow their strength—meaning that their muscular development has not kept pace with the body—frequently suffer from great weakness of the feet. In all of these cases, rest, proper footwear, and general hygiene will relieve the condition. As soon as the feet are weary, they should be rested; forced activity will result in flat foot and other troubles. Massage, hot and cold baths, douches, immersion in strong salt water, vigorous rubbings with a stiff brush to promote the circulation, are among the hygienic measures that bring relief.

To rest the foot, it is sometimes helpful to elevate them on an inclined plane. It has also been found that to cross them and rest on the outer borders affords quick relief, as it relaxes the tired muscles. Shoes must be built especially to fit the needs of sufferers from weak feet; the inner border of the sole and heel must be slightly elevated to counteract the tendency of the foot to incline *inward*. In mild cases, one-eighth of an inch is sufficient; in more pronounced cases, one-quarter to half of an inch is necessary; the wedge being highest at the instep or dome. Sometimes the heel is extended forward. If much awkwardness is experienced on account of the forcible throwing out of the foot, it can be overcome by strapping the foot with an inch-wide adhesive plaster. The feet can be strengthened by exercises: walk about the room on the outer borders; practice picking up objects with the toes.

When this condition of weakness is allowed to go on, it degenerates into flat foot, which means complete breaking down of the structures that form the arch. This is so serious a deformity that it requires expert treatment, but cases of acquired true flat foot are rare. There are, however, many degrees of partially broken-down arches



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FOOT CARE AND FOOT WOES

that can be relieved by rest, proper footwear, and the like. Surgeons now condemn the use of foot plates, arch supporters, and so on as having a tendency to prolong the evil. However, much good results from strapping the feet snugly, especially through the arch, with strips of adhesive plaster, and wearing stout shoes, the counters of which are stiff and project inward, thus supporting and resting the weak tissues that form the arch. Muscular exercises and especially dancing are recommended to strengthen the feet and overcome the trouble.

Hallux valgus is the high-sounding name for a great toe that leans so far outward as to cause deformity of the joint. The affection is rarely pronounced before middle life—though it may begin in childhood—and for this reason it is often attributed to gout. The presence or absence of gout has nothing to do with it; the pain and distress in the joint are due to inflammation set up by the pressure and friction to which it is subjected, which in time produces a *bunion*. The condition spoils the gait and cripples the patient, to say nothing of the unsightliness of the foot to which it gives rise. It will not cure itself, and causes periodical attacks of pain and disability. The U. S. Government found this the most frequent and painful deformity among its army men, and after years of experimentation a shoe has been designed that is said to be unequalled for comfort and health.

Given proper shoes and persistent treatment, the trouble can be arrested and even cured. Devices have been made that can be worn on the inner border of the foot and to which the toe is clamped, but they are cumbersome. Instead, a broad piece of surgeon's adhesive plaster may be attached

to the inner border of the toe. It should then be drawn away from its neighbor as far as can be borne without pain, and the strap of plaster passed under the toe along the sole of the foot to the middle of the outer side and up on the ankle. A wedge of cotton can be placed between the two toes to fill up the space. Massage of the enlarged joint with oil, several times daily, softens the tissue and reduces the deformity. A salicylic-acid plaster, worn over the bunion, removes the painful swelling, and in a few days the callous can be scraped off. If this treatment is faithfully carried out, and properly built shoes are always worn, the most unsightly of all foot troubles will vanish. Salicylic acid is commonly employed in foot troubles because it acts chemically upon the callous, softening it. Prussian lieutenants of infantry are censured if their men become footsore, so the following powder, adopted from the German, will prove most useful in preventing sore feet:

Salicylic acid	3 parts
Starch	10 parts
Pulverized soapstone	87 parts

If fresh stockings, dusted with the powder, are worn daily, the likelihood of corns, bunions, and other callosities will be reduced to a minimum, always provided that the footwear is correct.

All instruments used upon the feet, especially on corns, should be sterilized first. If corns are reduced each week with pumice stone, and then covered with a small, round piece of surgeon's plaster, they will not become troublesome and will eventually disappear. Cutting them stimulates their growth.

NOTE: Troubles of the feet dependent upon hot weather will be taken up in a later article. Meanwhile, formulas for foot lotions, powders, and corn cures are available to all readers.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.



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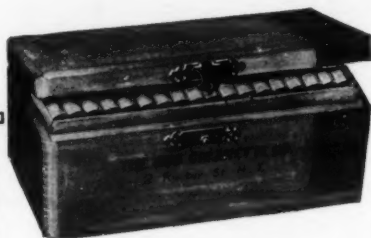
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THOUSANDS OF CONVALESCENT SOLDIERS ABROAD ARE STARVING AND HOMELESS AND INSUFFICIENTLY CLAD. MANY SEMI-CRIPPLED AND OTHERS SENT FROM THE TRENCHES WITH SHATTERED NERVES WANDER ALONG THROUGH THE BARREN COUNTRY SEEKING FOOD AND SHELTER WITHOUT HOPE OF RELIEF.

The condition of these war victims is appalling. The Commissary Departments provide for those only on the firing line. The Red Cross cares only for the wounded in hospitals. No organization specializes on relief for the Convalescent Soldier Abroad.

To meet the tragic need of this class, THE SPECIAL RELIEF SOCIETY, 597 Fifth Avenue, for the Convalescent Soldier Abroad, and the Unemployed in this country, has been organized by representative American women and men. The Society is affiliated with the War Relief Clearing House for France and her Allies which reports these frightful conditions, and which will also give accurate information as to where relief is most urgently needed in France, and the nature of the supplies required. Accurate reports of the needs of other warring countries are also received by THE SPECIAL RELIEF SOCIETY.

AMONG OUR OWN PEOPLE THERE IS AN UNPRECEDENTED EXTENT AND INTENSITY OF SUFFERING DUE TO UNEMPLOYMENT.

In helping the Convalescent Soldier Abroad, we purpose to give work to the unemployed in this country and thus benefit both classes. All work is being done by coöperation with already existing organizations for the unemployed, and by volunteers.

THE SPECIAL RELIEF SOCIETY appeals for new clothing, and for money to be used in this country for the purchase of the kinds of supplies needed. Donors may designate, within the scope of the society's operations, the countries to which relief shall be sent. How much we shall be able to do for the war sufferers and for our own unemployed will depend entirely upon the generosity of those who respond to this appeal.

All donations, even the smallest, will be gratefully received

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Money contributions and checks should be drawn to order of THE SPECIAL RELIEF SOCIETY, care of The Lincoln Trust Company, 204 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

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You will be convinced and delighted with

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If you want to restore and preserve your beauty, use this priceless beauty builder and your skin will gradually but surely take on the finer texture and greater clearness and freshness that the steady use of Campbell's Complexion Wafers always brings. This wonderful toilet aid is guaranteed to clear the complexion of pimples, blackheads, wrinkles, redness, yellow skin and all facial blemishes, and a new skin appears with the firmness and fineness of youth—naturally, quickly, but surely beautifies the face and figure. Don't use rouge or powder which fill the skin pores and brings poison into the system. Physicians warn against neglect of skin affections. Art now—delay is dangerous. Send to-day for Campbell's Wafers—50c. to \$1.00 per box by mail in plain cover on receipt of price, from

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Thousands have successfully used this formula to remove traces of age, illness or worry; 1 oz. of pure

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Deepest wrinkles, crow's feet, as well as finest lines, completely and quickly vanish. Face becomes firm, smooth, fresh, and you look years younger. No harm to tenderest skin. Get genuine Saxolite (powdered) at any drug store.



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"FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE U.S.A." NO. 1

George Washington — "Father of His Country"

EVERY AMERICAN knows that without "Immortal Washington" our National Independence would have been impossible. Few, however, know that the greatest battle of Washington's life was fought to secure for his countrymen the Constitution of the United States. Almost immediately after the Revolution it seemed that all the great sacrifice of blood and treasure had been in vain. The original thirteen states refused to work in harmony, either in spirit or in law. The new Republic was tottering to its foundations. At this critical period in American history the most brilliant men of each state met in convention and unanimously elected Washington as President—undoubtedly the most momentous gathering of the kind the world has ever known. Here he displayed as great ability as law-maker as he had as a warrior. For months the Fathers of the Republic labored, and finally adopted our present National Law, which forever guarantees Religious, Commercial and Personal Liberty. This was in 1787. Seventy years later Anheuser-Busch established their great institution upon the tenets of the Federal Law which Washington did so much to create. Like all of the great men of his time he was a moderate user of good old barley brews. For three generations Anheuser-Busch have brewed honest malt and hop beers. To-day 7500 people are daily employed to keep pace with the ever-increasing public demand. The great popularity of their brand—BUDWEISER—due to quality, purity, mildness and exquisite flavor, has made its sales exceed those of any other beer by millions of bottles.

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